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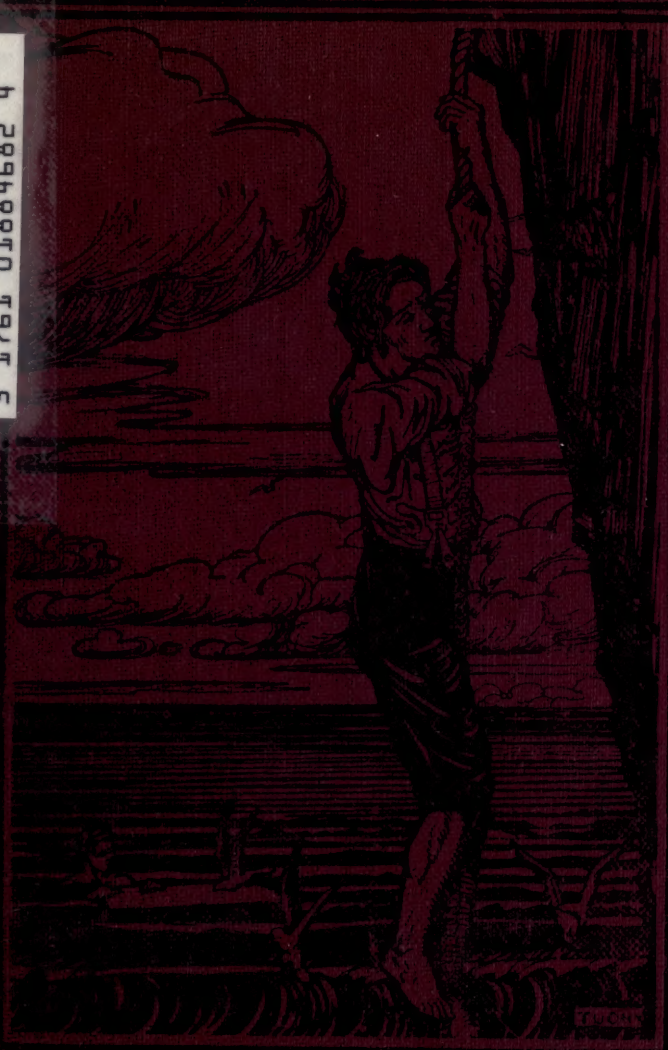

The Chain of Gold

Standish O'Grady

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THE CHAIN OF GOLD

Escape from the Cave by the Chain of Gold.

THE CHAIN OF GOLD

A Tale of Adventure on The West Coast of Ireland

BY

STANDISH O'GRADY

Author of

"THE COMING OF CUCULAIN"; "THE FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE"; "LOST ON DU-CORRIG," ETC.

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THE CHAIN OF GOLD

CHAPTER I.

AN OCEAN WAIF.

BY FRANK FURBISHER.

In the autumn of '51, I, being then fifteen years of age, was residing with my aunt near a little fishing village on the coast of Brittany. I was an invalid—sick, indeed, both in mind and body. About an arrow-shot from the cottage which my aunt rented there was a very pretty strand, a favourite haunt of mine, it was so quiet and solitary, like myself,—for I too was very quiet and solitary. It was only a few yards in length, and was girt by rocks on each side, which formed a charming little bay when the tide was in.

I have said that I was an invalid. I was indeed, a prey to that most distressing of all mental and nervous maladies, insomnia. Though a most keen and ardent student, I had been compelled by my medical advisers not only to leave school, but to intermit for a time everything in the nature of study. They enjoined in all ways the most perfect rest and quiet. In consequence, my aunt, who had been once very happy here herself, brought me to this remote little Breton village. My physicians had also recommended that I should endeavour to snatch a little sleep at any time, under any circumstances, no matter how broken that sleep might be. So I used to wander forth with my rug and drowse a little when the fit came on.

One beautiful morning in the late autumn I sought my little haven as usual. The tide was almost full in, the ripples breaking upon the white pebbles, and pushing before them weeds of many colours, chips, straws, and all manner of flotsam and jetsam, and sending out little showers of spray like glittering diamonds. Beyond, the sea lay calm and gray and gently

heaving. I laid my rug upon the strand close to the water and sat down there, leaning against a boulder, and for a while watched languidly the breaking ripples, and languidly listened to their music. Presently I was aware of a sharper sound, as of something metallic clinking against stones. I looked to my right, saw a delf jar there, half afloat, knocking gently against the stones, ceaselessly pushed upon by the wavelets, and clinking faintly at each fresh impulse. It came slowly towards me, moving from right to left. When it reached my feet, I leaned forward and took it. It was not corked, but was stopped with a little timber plug. So weak were my hands that I had some difficulty in removing the stopper. The jar was empty save for a little salt water, which I let dr[illegible] out. I flung it from me into the water, and after watching it as it dipped and rose for a few minutes, leaned back again, closed my eyes and forgot it. I had a book with me—Edgar Allan Poe's strange stories—but was too languid to read, and indeed felt a little drowsy, and presently fell asleep, or rather half asleep, for at this time

I never rightly slept, and never without dreams, dreams usually of an unwelcome nature.

As I dreamed now, the jar which I had been handling just before continued to appear and re-appear in my dreams, greatly increased in size. Then it seemed to me that there were people imprisoned in it, who passionately cried to me to liberate them. The voices that cried out seemed to me to be the voices of boys. I awoke with a start and sprang to my feet, trembling violently. But for this apparently grotesque and foolish vision the present story would never have been written. This fantastic dream was for me the beginning of a new life, the first link in a chain of events which have formed for me the strangest experience which I have ever met with.

All was serene, still, and beautiful as before. The calm sea stretched out before me, gray, glimmering, and undulating gently; there too, heeled on one side and rocking, floated the little brown-white jar which had so strangely affected my mind in sleep. It was now in the very

entrance of the little harbour, and as if retreating into the deep sea.

Dressed as I was, I dashed into the water. I could not swim, and feared that the jar might get beyond my depth were I to delay even a moment. I was but just able to reach it, standing up to my chin in the water.

I waded ashore with my treasure, and, turning the mouth towards the now-risen sun, perceived within something that looked like paper or parchment. Then I hastened home, and rushed past an astonished French maid into my bedroom, locked the door, and flung myself down into a chair, giddy and trembling with excitement.

The echoes of the voices which cried in my dream were still ringing in my ears, so singularly vivid had the vision been.

Dripping as I was, I sat quiet for some five minutes, holding the precious flotsam in my hand, and endeavouring to still the agitation of my mind. So certain was I that I held in my hand the clue to some strange story, I felt I could afford to wait. Eventually I changed my

clothes, and having first thought of extracting the paper, finally broke the jar, fearing that the document, already injured by the water, might be further injured by endeavours to extract it through the narrow opening. I may mention that the lip at one point had been broken, no doubt by striking upon rocks. Here the water had found entrance. I took care, however, to keep the sherds. The document was wound up in a roll and quite wet.

I did not dare to touch it till I had kindled my bedroom fire, which chanced to be set. Then handling the paper with the utmost care, I dried it thoroughly before the blaze, and not till then attempted to unroll it. The writing was on the inner side, and was in red characters—red ink, or more probably blood.

They were almost illegible, but after long and intense poring I was able to make out with certainty the following words and letters :—

"We are here . . . well . . . Rohar"—evidently a proper name, for it began with a capital letter. "July hurricane . . . August."

After this, and below the body of the writing,

were what seemed to be two Christian names reduced to blotches but bracketed, and one surname, of which the only legible letter was the first. It was "F."

So intense was my preoccupation while studying the document that though my aunt had tapped more than once at the door, I had not heard her. Eventually I heard her, and having answered reassuringly was allowed to be at peace.

At this time my mind was strangely affected by Poe's weird tales of wonder and mystery. I longed to meet with some such adventure, some rare and curious experience like those which form the theme of his fascinating stories; to light upon and follow some clue leading to hidden treasures or great discoveries. Now by the rarest chance, if the thought of providential interposition were to be excluded—and I was not inclined to exclude it—some such experience was about to be mine. Some such clue was cast, as it were, from the deep into my hands. The combination of fortuitous events by which I had arrived at the possession of this precious bit of

writing struck me much—my illness, the selection by my aunt of this remote spot, the accident of my coming to the beach just when I did, the strange dream which caused me to recover the waif, the million chances and changes, and countless intricate influences of wind and wave which had driven that little flotsam to my particular haven. The dream, too, surprised me more than anything else, it was so astonishingly vivid.

CHAPTER II.

ROHAR—WHERE?

BY FRANK FURBISHER.

BEFORE I left my room I vowed never to rest till I had found and rescued those lost ones, whoever they might be, and fulfilled the task which had been so marvellously entrusted to me alone in the wide world. For the pursuit of such a purpose I had means and ways which might not have fallen to many other boys. The lady who was my guardian, for I was an orphan, tenderly loved me, and could deny me nothing in reason. From the Court of which I was the ward she was allowed a thousand a year for my maintenance, and she was herself affluent. Moreover, she was tender-hearted and sympathetic in the extreme, ever alert to answer any call made upon her purse or her time by suffer-

ing humanity, and singularly intelligent, and, what was more remarkable, as romantic as a school-girl. From her I knew I should have all possible furtherance in my quest, except worldly wisdom, for of that she had a small share. She hoped greatly that I would pursue the occupation of letters. Alas! she passed away before I had given more than a promise of what I have been since able to achieve.

That night I told her all. She was keenly excited and sympathetic, even beyond my expectations. Together we pored over the strange scripture. "It is strange," "Strange," "Most strange," she kept repeating at intervals. She was subject to an impediment in her speech, and stammered more than usual when excited. To-night she stammered a great deal.

She agreed with me that "Rohar" was the name of a place, and that there evidently the writers of the manuscript had been cast away. They were on a rock in the sea, she said, on some very remote and unvisited part of the French coast.

"But, Frank," she said suddenly, "you were

sleepless before. Now this wonderful thing will quite rob you of sleep."

"I sleep so little now," I said, "that that does not greatly matter. But if you help me, dear aunt, I shall see this task through, with sleep or without it."

She continued to pace up and down the drawing-room, with her hands behind her, murmuring, "Strange, strange, most strange and interesting!" What struck her as most remarkable was the harmony which she discovered between my dream and the facts as disclosed by the writing, for the voices which cried out in the dream were the voices of boys, and the handwriting on the MS., so far as decipherable, certainly showed signs of immaturity. It was she who first noticed that feature of the MS.

By her advice I went first to our village Curé. He was a student and antiquarian, and a correspondent of various learned Societies. I was such a miser with regard to this wonderful secret, and so determined to follow up the clue as far as possible by my own exertions, that the only point which I asked him to solve was

whether there was a place named Rohar anywhere on the French coast, or whether, among the insular groups of the Channel, there was any rock or islet of that name.

The Curé very good-naturedly undertook the enquiry. There was now a tedious delay of more than a fortnight, while the Curé was conducting a wide correspondence with regard to that question. In the meantime I pored unceasingly over my precious MS., and indeed my aunt and myself seldom talked of anything else. We concluded that the boys were either upon a rock in the sea, quite out of the track of passing ships, or that they had been flung upon some strand quite surrounded by unscaleable cliffs, a position from which they could not escape by climbing, and that, being unable to swim, they could not escape by sea. I had once seen a picture of a poor sailor marooned in such a spot, a picture into which the artist had introduced by an unexpected stroke of genius a very singular suggestion of despair. On one side was the calm sea; on all the others steep, impending cliffs. Upon a boulder in the middle

of the strand sat the sailor supporting his head with his hands, an elbow on either knee, and staring out before him. Opposite to the sailor, and quite close to him upon another boulder, sat Death, also in the self-same attitude. He stared at the sailor and the sailor at him.

I believed that the lost boys were in some such situation. My aunt did so too. Consequently the fortnight which now elapsed before the Curé could give me a definite answer to my question was one of much suffering to both of us, though relieved by the word "well," which was clearly decipherable, as the reader is aware, in one part of the MS. And yet the blotched and illegible text might be, "We are well, but food is nearly unprocurable," or "We are well, but fresh water is failing."

At the end of a fortnight all but one day, the Curé announced to me that on all the French coast there was no such place as Rohar, nor yet in the insular groups of the channel. That evening we started for London.

CHAPTER III.

ROHAR DISCOVERED.

BY FRANK FURBISHER.

HAD I been older and wiser I would at once have sought out a clever detective and put the whole affair into his hands. Of this I never thought, as I would have done had I ever come across detective literature, which did not flourish in those times.

I went to an advertising agent, and bade him advertise in all the newspapers of the maritime counties and shires for two boys lost in the hurricane which blew in July, boys whose name began with an "F." I only advertised in the English and Scotch and Welsh papers, for I said that if the boys were Irish, the writing would be in the Irish language. Though I knew a good deal then for a boy, in some respects I

was singularly ignorant. At the same time I had a case made for my precious MS., lest it should be injured. The case was like a daguerrotype case; we called photographs daguerrotypes then.

To these advertisements, which were continued for weeks, I got many replies, one and all asking for money as the price of information. This I would have gladly given, but my aunt, though anything but worldly wise, perceived the true motive of these communications. My disappointment, as may be imagined, was extreme. Curiously enough, however, this mystery, which my guardian feared would quite rob me of sleep, had exactly the contrary effect. On the night of the day on which I got the letter I slept well, and every night after that slept well. From day to day my health, both physical and mental, improved.

Disappointed in this clue, I turned to the other—the proper name of the place. I called on our family solicitor, and put to him shortly, for I did not much like him, the question, "If I know the name of a place, and do not know

where it is, what steps should I take to discover it?" He stretched a ruler across his forehead and proceeded to "pump me." But I would not submit to this, and put to him again my question, and in a manner showed that I would not be trifled with. Under the influence of this quest, and the demands it made upon me, I had grown bold and strong, and was delighted to find that I could speak with firmness and decision to this inquisitive person, and bring him so soon to a sense of his place and mine. Finally, he advised me to call at the offices of the Geographical Society. This I did, and after a good deal of trouble found myself closeted with a very amiable and no doubt wise old gentleman, who, after turning over divers books and maps, assured me that there was no such place in Great Britain.

"Not even in Ireland?" I said.

"Not even in Ireland," he replied.

"The people of Ireland talk Irish, of course?" I said.

He smiled. "Well, a good many of the common people do," he answered; "but the language

of the educated classes is exclusively English. And now that you mention it," he added, " the name Rohar has a very Irish or West Scotch look about it. But may I ask, why are you so anxious, for anxious I perceive you are?"

I evaded this question as well as I could. The influence of Edgar Allan Poe was strong in my mind, and I wished to work out the problem by myself.

Now a sudden thought struck me. " Might there be local names of places," I said, " which in the maps and geographies are entered under different designations?"

When I said this he became very lively and communicative, and mentioned a great number of divergencies between the local and the geographical names.

Thanking this amiable old gentleman for his assistance, I went straight to Willing, and bade him advertise in all the newspapers of the Irish and Scotch maritime counties for information about the topical name Rohar, believed to be the local designation of an island, cliff, or headland.

I added that the matter was one of life or death.

To this I received after a few days a reply to the following effect :—

"DEAR SIR,—Rohar is the local designation of a promontory on the west coast of Ireland. It runs westward from the little posting town of Ahascragh. Of this you may be assured, for I know the place well.

"Hoping that this information will be of service to you, I remain, yours truly,

"THOMAS FREEMAN, Clerk."

The delight of my aunt and myself when we read this letter can be more easily imagined than described. My months of searching, meditation, and enquiry had at last been crowned with success. It seemed to me now that nothing remained but to go straight to this town of Ahascragh, which I soon discovered and located both in the Irish railway book and on the map, organise there a search expedition, explore all the coast line and the rocks and islets of that

promontory, discover the lost ones, and bear them to their home, wherever that might be. Already I had feasted my imagination on the joy of their parents, brothers, and sisters when I should appear leading with me the lost ones recovered as from the grave. I tried to imagine what those lost boys might be like, and what the nature of their home and of the bereaved ones there. Not for a moment did the thought cross my mind that there might be something misleading in the word "Rohar."

How I fared now, and the curious adventures and experiences which met me in Ireland, I shall relate presently.

Curiously enough, though I did not suspect it at the time, Thomas Freeman, clerk, writer of the letter just quoted, was the father of the boys of whom I was in search. The capital F in the MS. was the first letter of the name "Freeman."

[In my capacity of editor, I now suspend my own narrative in order to introduce to the reader the Freeman family, and acquaint him with the circumstances under which the lads

were lost, and the nature of the home from which they had been so tragically taken away, uncertain yet whether only to privation, solitude, suffering, and ultimate recovery, or to solitude and suffering, which was to terminate in death.

The following chapters have been excerpted from much larger narratives, kindly written at my instance by two junior members of the Freeman family, Sam and Charley, good friends of mine now, and both at the present time doing conspicuously well in their respective walks in life.—F. B.]

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE HEARTH-SIDE.

BY CHARLES FREEMAN.

THE irony of things! Yes; things can be very ironical sometimes. Scenes the serenest are often charged with meanings the most terrible.

We sat at home together one evening, all of us but two, of whose loud and turbulent arrival we were in momentary expectation. They had been from home the whole day shooting, as we thought, for they had brought the gun with them. The tempest was howling without, but its mighty roar in the woods which surrounded the Parsonage only made the peace which prevailed within all the sweeter. A bright fire fed with turf and bogwood blazed in the big old-fashioned grate. Burnished and glittering, the tall silver candlesticks stood on the table, and

between them the equally bright snuffers and snuff-dish. My father was composing his sermon, my mother sewing by the fire. For the hundredth time I was poring over a scrap-book filled with military pictures. My next brother, Sam, quite noiselessly was cutting and paring a heap of rods in a remote and dark corner of the room to which the carpet did not extend. He was making a crib for catching birds, and was fearful of being noticed and sent elsewhere with his "litter."

"Through the thick night we heard the bugle blow."

It was nothing alarming, only a post-boy riding in with his mail-bags to the little village. He always blew his bugle as he passed our gate, and again as he entered the village. The bugle-call came between two awful claps of thunder. It was late summer, but night had fallen early. Hours before night was due the maid had brought in the candles, closed the shutters, and drawn the heavy red curtains. About half an hour after that bugle-call she came in again, bearing my father's own post-bag, which was

still wet in spite of friction and drying at the kitchen fire. I saw her hand shaking violently. I looked up. Her face was as white as paper.

"What a night for the poor sailors!" said my mother, laying down her sewing, and looking out before her. As she spoke another terrific crash seemed to shake the house, and the roaring of the storm redoubled its fury. My father did not answer; he was too deep in his sermon. I don't think he even knew the night was stormy. He wrote or leaned back in his chair with closed eyes, meditating, and from time to time took a pinch of snuff. A cat and a dog were silently pawing each other on the hearth-rug. Sometimes, at a sign from my mother, Sam, from the wicker basket lined with tin, lifted out a fresh sod of turf or a piece of bogwood, and placed it on the fire. There was a frequent hissing as heavy drops of rain came straight down the wide chimney and fell upon the glowing wood and peat. The tempest howled without, but all was peace here. Here there were only the flapping of the flames, the scratch of my father's pen, the faint click of my mother's needle as it

met the thimble, and almost fainter the sound of Sam's slicings and cuttings from his corner.

My mother rang her little bell. The maid answered the call. She stood half in and half out of the room, with her hand on the door-handle. Her face was invisible as she said, "Yes, ma'am," so with a child's quick instinct I felt something was wrong. Also I thought I heard a sob.

"Are the young gentlemen returned, Teresa?" said my mother in her gentle low tones, not caring to reprove Teresa just now.

"No, ma'am," said Teresa.

She closed the door as she said this. A sudden motion caused me to look at my mother. Her face was disfigured. Then I heard somewhere, rising wild and shrill through the hollow roarings of the storm, the Irish *caoine*, the death-cry. My mother started to her feet with quick, short breaths and a low moan. The door was violently flung open. The servant ran in like one mad. She fell upon her knees, and with arms raised above her head, cried out—

"O ma'am, O ma'am! God be their defence this night! O ma'am, sure they're on the sea. They went out before the dawn, and never came back, and never will come back any more."

Of that night, and of the days and weeks and months which followed it, I shall write no more. You must imagine what I feel myself powerless to describe.

That is what, for my part, I remember of the circumstances under which my brothers, John and Edward Freeman, were lost in the great hurricane of July 29, 1851.

CHAPTER V.

THE LETTER FROM YARMOUTH.

BY SAMUEL FREEMAN.

My name is Sam Freeman. I am in the chapter before this, which was written by Charley. It was I who was making the crib. I cannot write like him, for I was always the dunce of the family, and a dunce I suppose I shall always be. But as I have been asked to tell my part of the story, I will do it as well as I can.

The storm in which my eldest brothers, John and Edward, were lost was bad enough, though one would think from the way Charley writes about it that it was the greatest storm that ever blew since the beginning of the world. The house didn't shake at all. It was a very solid house, square, and not tall, and with walls four feet thick. How he remembers all that about

the maid's hand-shaking, and all those other little things that happened so long ago, I cannot understand.

We thought at first that my brothers might have landed before the storm on some distant part of the coast. A few days finished our hopes this way. Then we thought that they might have been blown out to sea, and been picked up by some passing ship. But it was a poor hope at the best, and when months had passed, and no news came from anywhere, I heard no more about the "passing ship."

Then we wore black, because there was no more hope. Now, though I said nothing about it, I did not in my heart—not for a long time—believe that they were lost at all, but were only out on some big lark or spree that I could not quite understand. I never knew such wild creatures as those big brothers of mine, Jack and Ned. I fancy that they were both a little mad. They were always doing queer, cracked things—staying away for days in islands or caves or wild places in the mountains, where they lived like Robinson Crusoe. Sometimes they couldn't get

back, and at other times they wouldn't. I have known them to sleep on deal floors, wrapped up in their blankets, instead of in their beds, "to make themselves hardy," they said, and bathe all the winter through, coming out of the water as red as boiled lobsters, and saying, "Ha! ha! that is so jolly!" All brag and show-off!

My father was so taken up with his work or his books, or in walking up and down meditating, that he would hardly notice their absence. Perhaps when they were a week away, no one knowing anything about them, he would wake up and say to my mother, "Where are the big boys? they were not at family prayers to-day." They had a great deal too much liberty for their good. Then when they succeeded in losing themselves, my father used to take on about them in the most awful way, and raise up the whole country to search. Boats would be sent rowing about the coast and islands. Police orderlies galloped across the country, and there was a frightful to-do on all sides, till they came back smiling, to be kissed and wept over. Mad as they were, however, they were clever enough

to know very well how to take care of themselves. I used to have some notion that if they were sunk to the bottom of the deep sea they would rise again like corks, and quite as lively.

So, though winter was now at hand, and every Sunday I wore black, I wore no black in my mind, for I simply wouldn't or couldn't believe that they were drowned and done for, for they were capable of almost anything. Once I heard them talk of going to America in their old rowing yawl, and of "the run" and "favourable winds," etc. quite seriously. Neither that nor anything else was beyond them. So, though I said nothing, for I didn't want to be looked at as unnatural and unfeeling when everyone else was crying and in sorrow, I continued to tell myself that this was only a bigger lark than usual. Yet, as October was passing away, and cold days and storms coming on, I began to feel uncomfortable, and then more and more uncomfortable, till my mother noticed my looks, and said to Mr. Humphreys, the tutor, "I think you had best go home for a holiday. I don't like Sam's looks. We must give his mind a rest."

I was glad of that, for I hated lessons. But though I had holidays now, I could not enjoy them. I had not the heart to go trapping and snaring or rabbit-sticking or to do anything, though the country was beginning to be alive with woodcock and snipe, blackbirds, field-fares and red-wings, and flocks of stare (starlings)—such crowds of them as I never saw before. All this showed that an extra bad winter was at hand. My mother noticed that I did not improve in spite of the holidays, and became very gentle with me. She was thin and pale now, and read and wept and prayed a great deal. "It is a long time since we have had a rabbit for dinner, Sam," she said one day, hoping to stir me up a little; "do try and kill a rabbit. You used to be such a good shot." More than once she said something like this, even putting in my hands the sticks, something like a policeman's baton, with which I used to knock the bunnies over better than Jack could shoot them with his gun. But it was no use. I did not care to kill the bunnies; and if I threw at one, I missed him. Then I had no one to talk to, for

Charley, though he is a great man to-day, a famous preacher, and writes books, was a poor little creature in those times, and knew nothing about anything, though I confess he always looked enormously wise.

In the end of October or the beginning of November I got a singular letter from a little friend of mine who lived at Yarmouth. His name was Beecher. His father had been on our coast for two years taking soundings for Government maps. Sandy Beecher and I became very good friends, and wrote to each other after Mr. Beecher and the family went to live in England. The singular part of his letter was this. As I have all his letters I am able to give it exactly: "The English master was telling us the other day about storms, and how they are made, and told us many curious things about them. He said a hurricane blew off the west coast of Ireland in July, and that it was hardly felt in England. Then a boy called Jackson said that he had seen lately in a newspaper an advertisement about two boys lost in a hurricane which blew in that month, and whose surnames began

with an 'F.' Is not that singular? I asked Jackson where he had seen the advertisement, and he said it was on a torn piece of a newspaper, and he did not know what newspaper; but that the name of the advertiser was Fubbish, which is a funny-looking name, and that he did not remember the address."

Now another boy would have shown this singular letter to his father, but in those days I was very much afraid of my father. He was so clever and learned himself, that he thought very little of me because I was a dunce. Indeed, he took hardly any notice of me at all. Once I remember he told someone that "Sam was going to be a poulterer." This was an allusion to my snarings and trappings. I did not know then what a poulterer meant, but I knew from the way he said it that he was laughing at my low propensities in the way of sport. So I did not show this letter to my father, and did not like to show it to my mother, for all this about the advertisement might come to nothing, and I would be only raising her hopes to see them again cast down, and herself a great deal

thinner, sadder, and paler than she was now. Of course this letter excited me greatly, for though I reflected that names beginning with "F" were common enough, the "two boys" and the "hurricane," all coming together, made things look much better. A grown man would, I suppose, have gone off to London and employed a great detective like Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who seems to be at the top of that profession at present. But I was only a boy of thirteen, knowing very little about anything. I turned the matter over a great many times in my mind; but the more I thought about it, the lower my hopes sank. If my brothers were alive, surely they would write and say so. Even if by a rare chance the advertisement referred to my brothers, it might only mean that their bodies, or something belonging to them had been found.

We lived at one side of a very long and wide bay, and at the south side of it was a big headland, where my father had an estate.

There was a house there belonging to us, in which his sister, my aunt, lived. She was very kind and nice, and a great favourite with all of

us. I said I would go to her and tell her all about the letter. I thought that she might send me, along with some clever man to take care of me, to Yarmouth, where we would make all possible inquiries. When I told my mother that I wished to go to my aunt's, she said, "Very well, Sam. The change of air will do you good," and began to put up my things. It took me two days to get round the bay, for the journey was fifty-three miles (Irish). The second day we passed an outside car going at a tremendous pace. On one side, opposite the driver, was a boy, well muffled, one who was evidently accustomed to take care of himself. His eyes were large, dark, and bright, and looked as if they saw something far away of which he was in pursuit.

His appearance was so singular that I continued to watch him till he was out of sight. From the way in which he sat I knew he was English. My driver shared my curiosity—"Mad or a pote" (poet) was his verdict.

My aunt happened to be entertaining company when I arrived, so, after eating something,

I strolled down to the sea-shore to visit some fishermen, old friends of mine, and tenants to my father. One of these was a talkative but entertaining old fellow called Flurry—I never knew why, for he was as composed and quiet as anyone else. Old Flurry was glad to see me, and bade me welcome, and Mrs. Flurry dusted a chair for me, and curtseyed a great many times, looking very hospitable and happy.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD FLURRY'S YARN.

BY SAMUEL FREEMAN.

PRESENTLY Flurry and I began to talk about the hurricane.

"Is there any chance, Flurry, do you think, that they pulled through somehow and escaped?"

"God alone knows that, Master Sam," said Flurry. "And sure sometimes the open boat lives through when the ship goes down." Of this he proceeded to give me examples fetched from long seafaring experiences. I saw him looking at me in a curious manner two or three times.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" I said.

"I was thinking whether I'd tell your honour

about a young gentleman not right in his intellects who was here ere yesterday; and begor I will, Master Sam," he said, lowering his voice and coming close to me. "'Tis my opinion that there's someone after the two young gentlemen that's lost; maybe he has only a bee in his bonnet, and maybe not, and sure good light may come in sometimes through a hole in the thatch, when 'tis the will of God."

It may be imagined how my heart began to thump and fly about at these singular words, the beginning of a very singular story. Of course, I can't remember the exact words used by old Flurry, but his tale ran something like this :—

"Ere last night about sundown there came driving special into the village a young English gentleman, a little older maybe than yourself, and a great deal taller and slenderer, and he having the appairance of one pursuing something, and hot on the scent. His face was pale, and his eyes black and in a blaze. O yes, sir, that was what he was, as true a gentleman, for an Englishman, as ever stepped, both in appairance and in doin's conformable. Meself and

Murty Ogue and Murty More were on the street near the Widow Hoolahan's soap and tobacco shop, when the special comes tearing up, and the young gentleman made a grab at the reins from the driver, and brought the car to a standstill when he seen us, and lept down at wanst. And says he, 'You seafaring men,' that was the word he used, 'can you get me a boat and a boat's crew for to-morrow to row me round the headland and show me the cliffs and caves?' And we thought that same a little quare wid the winter coming down, for the likes of them—I mane tourists—are the same as butterflies lovin' the sunshiny weather. So says I, 'Your honour can have them both wid a welcome and at any hour to suit your honour's pleasure and convanience.' And says he, mighty polite and with a most illigant accent, 'Thank you, my men. But I cannot accept your services as a gift, if you mane that.' And says I, 'Your honour would be welcome to them anyway, but if I'm to fix the reward I'll say half-a-crown for the boat, and sixpence a piece for the men; also their diet.' Wid that he took a turn like, and

says he, 'Is it for the day's rowing?' Says I, for I was a bit offended like, 'Think what you will, your honour, but 'tis no more than's fair, and any man in Ahascragh will tell you the same.' 'Good God!' says he, 'to think that men's labour should be of so little value! You shall have five shillings per man and your diet too, and now you go at once and order the diet, for I don't know what you like best,' and wid that he puts into my hand a goold sovereign."

I must here leave out a good deal of Flurry's narrative, which was a great deal longer than it might have been.

The young gentleman succeeded in getting a bed in the Post-office. Flurry laid in a great store of provisions and porter, and had the boat and the boat's crew in readiness at daylight. In the end we got launched. What now follows is Flurry's strange story continued :—

"He had his gun with him, sir, and a bugle same as the postman's, only longer and a dale handsomer, to wake the echoes, he said; for he became pleasant in himself once we were on the water, and he talked little, but he looked

surprising happy, and like someone in great expectations. Then, when we came to the cliffs, he kep firing shots and blowing his bugle ever and always, and watchin' the stone walls of the big pint (point) from the say to the sky and down again, thravellin' over everything with his eyes. And every cave we came to he was for penethrating—'twas his own word—and we lit torches in them, and he'd bugle between whiles and listen same as he expected someone to answer him, and he all the time purtending that it was the echoes he was after. Well, sir, as we went on and on, and in especial after we passed the headland and were coasting up the cliffs looking to norrard, I observed that he became more and more melancholious and cast down, so that it was a sorrow to see the disappintment that was visible on his faitures, and elegant faitures they were too, and his hair curly and long and as fine as a young lady's. Wanst he turned from us to look at something he took from his bosom, and I thought it was a picture, and says I to myself, ' 'Tis airly in life the young gentleman is bringing that trouble and

heartscald upon him'; but begor, Master Sam, it was no picture, but a bit of paper in a box-case, and the paper was marked with red ink; but whether there was writing on it or not meself can't rightly say. And in the same way that we went we came back, and says I to the men in Irish, 'This is the quarest divarsion I ever come across in all my born days.' 'Twas dark when we got to the slip, and the young gentleman, I make sure, was crying wid vexation and disappintment. When we set him ashore he bade me come to him and we walked by ourselves.

"'Was anyone hereabouts lost in the Hurricane?' says he. 'I don't know the ship,' says I. At that he laughed, and says he, 'I mane in the big storm in the latter end of July.' And says I, 'There was not,' but at wanst I corrected meself, and tould him that the landlord's two sons were lost out of Dun-Beacon, at the other side of the bay to norrard. And wid that he springs upon me like a greyhound on a hare, and I think the marks of his two hands are in my arms, crying out at the same time, 'His name, his name,' and when I said, 'Mr. Freeman,' away

wid him into the village as fast as he could lay leg to the ground. Faix, when we all came to the Post-office for our wages he was gone, but the money was all right for——Where are you off to, Master Sam?" For the second time Flurry was left alone and wondering, for I too was running, and as fast as I, for my part, "could lay leg to the ground." I guessed at once that this strange visitor at Ahascragh was the same who had put the advertisement in the Yarmouth paper, that he had some clue to the mystery of my lost brothers, and that I would find him at Dun-Beacon before me.

Soon seated behind my aunt's swiftest horse, I was on my way home. My visit was certainly one of the briefest. On the evening of the second day, as I drove through our own village Dun-Beacon, I stopped at the little hotel, and asked whether a young English gentleman named Fubbish was staying there. They said "Yes," but that his name was Furbisher—Mr. Francis Furbisher. Fubbish, Furbisher—yes. It was all right. This was evidently the

mysterious advertiser about whom my chum Sandy had written to me from Yarmouth.

Just then the church bell began to ring for Wednesday evening service. I knew that I would catch it if I were to absent myself from church, and as the loss of an hour or two would not matter, I drove home, changed my clothes, and got to church a little after service had commenced. I saw a slim lad, better dressed than anyone I ever saw before, apparently no end of a swell, slide like a ghost into the pew opposite to ours. It was the same lad, with the large, black, eager-looking eyes, whom I had passed in that two days' journey round the bay.

[I now proceed with my own narrative from the time when I received that information conveyed in the Freemans' letter.—F. B.]

CHAPTER VII.

THE MS. BECOMES CLEARER.

BY FRANK FURBISHER.

On the night of the morning when I received this letter, I left Euston Station by the Irish mail, having laid in a store of such things as I thought I should need in my marine questings and searchings. I passed through Holyhead and thence by the packet to Dublin. Driving across Dublin, I caught the Midland Great Western for Westport in Mayo. I slept there, and next morning hired a car, and in the evening reached the little village of Ahascragh. I have read the chapter written by Sam Freeman and old Flurry's quaint narration, in which I seem to figure somewhat comically. I certainly thought the people here very strange and wild.

It seems that they regarded me as something equally so.

How I fared here, and my bootless search along the tremendous cliffs and in the booming, echoing caverns of Rohar, has been already, I think, sufficiently suggested in my friend Sam's excellent memoir. Sam, it seems, saw and took notice of me in that swift drive from Ahascragh to Dun-Beacon round the big bay. I, however, did not see him, my thoughts being intent elsewhere. At Dun-Beacon I put up at the only hotel in the village, a primitive little inn truly, but the landlady was very kind and obliging. It was directly opposite the church, on the other side of the street. The rest of that day I spent in making inquiries concerning the Freeman family, and especially concerning the lost boys. I was now very undecided what to do next. From what I learned about Mr. Freeman himself, I did not think that his assistance would be profitable. Then, while it was still uncertain whether the lost lads were alive, I did not think it wise or right to raise again hopes which had been dis-

missed long since—hopes which in all probability were doomed to disappointment. Indeed, when I learned, as I did, that the brothers John and Edward Freeman were bold and expert swimmers, and most intelligent, wideawake, alert, and resourceful lads, it passed my power even to guess how they could possibly be still alive anywhere, and yet unable, after so many months, either to get home or to communicate with their parents. If they were on some rocky shore, could they not swim to some continuous strand? As to lonely desert islands and distant sea-surrounded rocks, my map showed none such. And yet the letter, so far as decipherable, proved that at the time it was written they were in some spot from which they were unable to escape.

When my landlady, who was very communicative and loquacious, described to me the third brother Sam, who has been already pretty well self-revealed to the reader, I resolved to make him my confidant, but learned that he was from home, and curiously enough, staying at the very place from which I had hastened away so

rapidly. On a certain evening (the church bell was tolling at the time) I called up the landlady, intending to order a car to be in readiness for me the following morning, for I now intended to go back to Ahascragh. Before I could speak, however, she said—

"There's the young gentleman, sir, that we were talking about. He came back not half an hour ago, sudden. The crayture! and he all in black."

I looked from the window, following the direction of Mrs. Hurley's sympathetic eyes, and saw a singularly sturdy little figure stepping through the church door, and felt at once that the owner of such a figure was a lad to be relied on. I snatched my hat, and leaving Mrs. Hurley amazed at my sudden exit, crossed the street, and entered the singularly plain building, which afterwards I used to hear Mr. Freeman speak of so reverently as "the House of God." The church was nearly empty. There, all in black, I saw Mrs. Freeman, the little boy Charley, and Sam. I entered the opposite pew, and during the service Sam and myself

continued to eye each other surreptitiously. As the congregation filed out, I touched him in the porch and said, "Come with me to the hotel; I have something to tell you." He was very shy, and walked silently by my side. I remember noticing the firm manner in which he walked, kicking out his feet before him, which were well shod in strong, square-toed, country-made boots, and the clash of his iron heels on the frosty road as we went down the street. He was short, square-shouldered, and upright, and evidently brave, stout, and self-reliant in an unusual degree. Beside him I seemed to glide along like a sort of ghost, feeling very light and unsubstantial, and was painfully aware of the contrast, especially as he would not or could not talk. He was very fair, well tanned and ruddy in face, with quite round, steady, blue eyes, very full, and which looked as if they had never blinked or winked since he was born. I know his type now, since I have begun to study and differentiate characters.

Hitherto I had been in a fever of excitement. I felt somewhat rebuked for this now by the

stolid and imperturbable demeanour of my new friend.

When I showed him the writing, he said at once, "That's Jack's." It was the first time he opened his lips, nor did his face express a perceptible sign of emotion.

Though he was two years younger than me, he made a suggestion which I surely ought not to have required. He said the bit of pointed timber with which Jack had written the letter must have left some mark on the paper.

"At home we have a microscope," he said; "let us look through it at the back of the paper." He went, and returned with the microscope. Together we examined through it the back of the paper, and saw clear markings there. These of course were undecipherable, being turned upside down; but we pricked with a needle along the lines so far as the microscope revealed them. After this we reversed the paper. The letter now read as follows :—

"Here we are. We are quite well, and have plenty of food and water. We are . . to the

south of the cliffs of Rohar somewhere . . We got through the July hurricane all right . . . . . .

JOHN
EDWARD } FREEMAN."

Now for the first time since I met him, Sam smiled—a practice at which he was far from apt.

"I would not doubt them," said Sam. "*They* are 'quite well.' *They* are all right. Of course they are. They always are. But *we* have not been quite well, and we have not been all right." From this forward he seemed to consider that his brothers had inflicted upon him a grievous wrong. Soon after Sam left me. It was late now, and he feared that a longer stay might lead to the discovery of his relations with myself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EIGHT-OARED BARGE.

BY FRANK FURBISHER.

NEXT day after breakfast Mr. Freeman called on me, in company with Sam. During the visit Sam remained quite in the background. One would think from his manner that we had never met before, and this Mr. Freeman, too, seemed to believe, from the way in which he tried, as it were, to trot out Sam and show his paces. He evidently wished me and Sam to become friends.

He went away, leaving Sam in my company, after passing some jest about Sam's trapping and snaring propensities, and after inviting me to take tea and spend the evening at the Rectory. He was very kind and courteous. His appearance did not suggest the benignity

which one expects to find in an elderly country clergyman, suggesting rather the student or the thinker. Sam in his part of the story has led us to think that his father did not like him, but the looks which he cast on the boy were certainly to my mind sufficiently affectionate and paternal, though, I confess, amused too. Indeed, my friend Sam, in spite of all his good qualities, was a little too much inclined to think that people in general were in a conspiracy against him.

That day we arranged all our plans. We would have an eight-oared boat; Sam knew where to get one, and there seemed to be no difficulty about the crew. We would store her well with provisions and all that might be necessary for such a voyage as we projected, for we purposed to explore the coast and islands along the whole of the west shore south of Rohar. Sam said that there was one good store in Dun-Beacon where they sold everything "from a needle to an anchor."

We made a long inventory of the things which we would require, after which we adjourned to

the great store shop, and ordered them. "Every penny of this, you know," said Sam, "those fellows," meaning his brothers, "must pay up. Salvage, you know"; and he looked at me so seriously with his blue eyes that I had some difficulty in not laughing.

He thought, or affected to think, that his brothers were alive and well, and even "hearty," and that we had nothing to do but just to bring them home, "if we did not meet them on the way, and get laughed at."

When I reminded him that the letter was written in August, nearly four months before this, and that they might have been starved, or otherwise done to death in the interim, he scoffed at the thought.

"I confess," said he, "that I was a little afraid of the hurricane, but as they rode out that, or at all events got to land somewhere, they are not only all right, you may depend upon it, but enjoying themselves too. I tell you," he said, "that almost nothing would kill those fellows. You don't know them, and they are

always having what they call adventures. I wish you and I had one."

I suggested that the quest upon which we were about to embark was one; that, to me at least, it was a very great adventure.

"I don't think it so," said he; "only a grind."

That he was not really so much at ease about his brothers I perceived from this, that still he would not tell his mother. All that Mr. and Mrs. Freeman were to know was that I was going on a sea-tour along that wild, romantic coast, and had invited Sam to accompany me. Of this Mrs. Freeman was very glad. I may add, though it is no part of the story, that I spent a pleasant evening at the quaint old Rectory.

Next morning Sam and myself, in our eight-oared barge, manned by wild-looking coast-men, all chattering Gaelic, and shouting "Brusthig, brusthig," which means, "Haste, haste," rowed out from the little harbour in quest of the two lost ones.

Our splendid eight-oared barge had been

procured by Sam from an ancient, long-deserted, palatial, and melancholy-looking residence on the coast. The family which lived here once had not been here for a generation, but the great barge in which they used to row to the town of Galway, apparently at a time when there were no roads in Connaught, was still preserved here, and kept taut and trim by a faithful servant. The barge was loaded with a great variety of things. Indeed, Sam as "ship's husband," had forgotten nothing.

We set forth that lovely December morning on our voyage of exploration, discovery, and relief, both in the highest spirits—Sam stoical and self-contained, as was his wont; I all of a tremble with joyous hope and expectation, increased by the strangeness and novelty of the whole situation, for I had been brought up inland, in the county of Devonshire, and knew almost nothing about the sea. The weather, though frosty, was beautifully fine and mild, and the sea calm.

Here then was I, a lad who before that was dying, as if by inches, suddenly, by means very

strange and marvellous, swept into the track of a most romantic adventure—romantic, though in the issue it might prove tragical as well—swept from Brittany into the remotest and wildest parts of the Irish shore, and into the company of a very welcome and interesting comrade; for different as we were in every way, this sturdy West-Irish lad and myself became fast friends, and have remained so from that day to this.

CHAPTER IX.

MIAH'S STRANGE YARN.

BY FRANK FURBISHER.

THE barge was the property of a certain Mr. Seaton, the last but absentee representative of a once great but now almost ruined and extinct family in the west of Ireland. As we rowed out from Dun-Beacon, Sam pointed me out the great square castle of the Seatons, standing on the rocky extremity of a point further east, and behind it the woods which surrounded the ruined mansionhouse of the Seatons. It was sad to think of a family which had flourished through so many wild centuries of war and rapine destroyed at last by reckless extravagance in times so peaceful as ours.

Sam told me that the Seatons were there "before the hills."

But to our story. Dawn was glimmering on

the level waters of the bay as we rowed out of the little basin.

As I was the paymaster, Sam wanted me to steer and take the command; but though I ardently desired to do so, I did not like to supplant my new friend in a position of authority which seemed to fit him perfectly, and to which he was certainly better suited than myself.

We aimed first for the Pipers, *i.e.*, certain black, isolated rocks which stood out of the sea at the extremity of the great cliff-walled promontory of Rohar. It was somewhere south of this, far or near, that the lost boys were marooned.

As may be imagined, I was in a state of the most joyous excitement. Now I determined, be the issue of this expedition what it might, that Old Ocean and I should never cease to be friends as long as I might live. My ancestors were almost sons of the sea. The famous navigator and pirate of the Spanish main, Frobisher, was one of my ancestors. Though his name is spelled "Frobisher" in school histories,

it really was "Furbisher." We still have three of his letters in which he signed himself so.

Of the extensive explorations along the wild west coast of Ireland which Sam Freeman and I, Frank Furbisher, now made, I might say much if the story were worth telling. Of all this, however—of our visitation of rocks and islands; our ramblings, torch in hand, through caves; and shoutings and shootings and bugle-blowings in all manner of strangely wild places along this ragged and iron-bound coast—I shall say nothing here.

To me, in spite of the occasional hardships which I had to endure, it was a perpetual delight, amounting often to ecstasy, while the hope that at any point we might hear the answering halloos of the lost ones kept my mind ever eager and alert, even when otherwise the romantic interest of the situation might for a moment flag. Usually we put into shelter for the night, and lodged in some little coast town or fishing village; but sometimes we passed the night on the water, well swathed, and like mummies, in our warm thick blankets. That was

generally when the shore accommodation was quite too rude and unwelcome. On such occasions we reared a sort of roof over the stern of the barge, and passed the night comfortably enough, the barge meanwhile either moored on the water or drawn up on the strand, and held even by props. We had a spirit-lamp, and made our own coffee. In the management of all this department Sam was very adroit and resourceful. I never knew before how much pleasure a person might get from merely doing himself what he wanted, and dispensing with servants. Oftener than was absolutely necessary we used to send the men ashore, and pass the night by ourselves under our sea-tent, lit with candles stuck in the necks of bottles; and truly our talk hardly ever ceased, for Sam, though far from voluble or ready with his tongue on small occasions, and as a rule the silentest boy I ever met, was, when he liked, a wonderful story-teller. For he told his stories in such a way that as he went on everything started up in my mind like a picture, and the people whom he described seemed to live and move before me. Then he

was literal-minded in an unusual degree, and everything he told me was either exactly true, or told to me exactly as he had heard it from someone else. Soon I began to find that when I myself related anything, my imagination, my desire to improve the story, was perpetually forcing upon me embellishments and exaggerations—an intellectual vice against which even now I am compelled to strive.

I now approach the crisis, the grand turning-point of our exploration. One day, it was in the very early morning, we rowed under the tallest cliffs that I had ever seen. We passed here without making any demonstration, for the cliff from sea to summit was sheer and visible the whole way. Rounding these cliffs, we came to a place which looked most promising, so ragged were the great rocks, so crannied with indentations, hollows, and even caves, and here indeed we spent a long time before rowing out again. But, as I have said, under that mighty wall of sheer cliff on which as it seemed that not even a goat could get a foothold, we did not shout or bugle or fire shots.

That night, however, as I pondered over the events of the day before falling asleep, it occurred to me that the manner of the rowing men as we passed along that cliff was very strange. Not only were they silent, to which I did not attach so much importance, but the expression of their eyes as they rowed past this place had something in it very peculiar and unaccountable. I am by nature what is called a "psychic," and something of a thought-reader, and on reflection, when the events of the day had ceased to exercise their direct influence upon my mind, I became aware that the men who rowed us knew something about this cliff which they did not dare to express.

The men too, as I remembered, were for rowing rapidly past this cliff, and had to be restrained, and compelled to row slowly; for I was at the time greatly interested in the wonderful beauty of the submarine sea-weeds.

I now called to Sam, and asked him whether he had noticed anything peculiar in the manner of the men as we passed this point. But Sam was sound asleep, and did not answer. So dis-

turbed was I by these thoughts that I could not go to sleep. About an hour after this I became aware of men talking. This night we had put up at a very rude and primitive little hotel, or rather public-house, not so much for the sake of the sleeping accommodation as for the sake of the fire and a warm room, for it was freezing hard. In the only bed-chamber there was no fireplace, so we resolved to pass the night in what was called the parlour. We had the one canvas and timber bedstead shifted down thither, which was easily done, for the legs were X-shaped, and folded up. I, as the weaker vessel, occupied the bed; Sam, rolled in his blanket, slept on an old, tattered, horse-hair sofa. Here, earlier in the evening, we had had a good supper of tea, ham, and eggs, and after a long talk beside the blazing turf fire which burned on the hearth, had lain down for the night.

Next to our room was the inn kitchen, separated from ours at one point by a partition of lath and plaster, from which in certain places the plaster had fallen away, so I could

distinctly hear the voices of the men conversing in the kitchen. The rest of our men had gone to lie down, where and how I don't know; but two of them were sitting up in the kitchen by the fire there, and talking with the landlord, who seemed to have a great appetite for conversation, and who, no doubt, was very inquisitive about us. It was the frequent use of the word "Freeman" which first attracted my attention, recurring as it did perpetually like the catch-word of a song. As we had been silent for a long time, no doubt the men thought we were asleep. I was about to order them to hold their tongues, when the word Carrig-an-deamhain struck my ear, and I remembered that, in response to a question of mine, one of the men that day had told me that this was the name of that remarkably steep cliff to which they seemed to have such an aversion, and past which they would have rowed so rapidly had they not been restrained. I did not know then, what I know now, that Carrig-an-deamhain means the Demon's Rock. Then, indeed, I sat up in bed and listened with all my ears. Our

men, I said, know something about this rock, and it is something which they don't want us to know. The speaker, for I knew his voice, was the oldest and hardiest of our crew, a great, white-haired old fellow called Miah, which is short for Jeremiah. He went barefooted, and in spite of the frost wore only a pair of flannel drawers and a flannel shirt; the shirt always open at the neck, and exposing a great deal of his hairy chest. He had a high hooked nose, small but remarkably bright and keen blue eyes, and a mouth usually shut tight like a trap, save when, as now, he chose to open it, when his talk was fluent and in manner eloquent. Listening now with all my ears, I heard Miah deliver himself as follows, as well as I can imitate his rude western Doric :—

"True it is, sir; wan or both of them *walk* there!! (God Almighty have mercy on us all!), be raison no doubt that it was there the boat was capsized or dhruv in and bruk agin the rocks. In the latter end of November me and Ned Clancy and me sister's son were coming up from Galway in Clancy's hooker. Well, at nightfall

the sucond night, the wind scanted, and the night came on that dark that I couldn't see my five fingers. Thin we tuk to the sweeps, rowing norrard always, till be raison of the blackness of the night, and not hearing any suff (surf), quite unbeknownst, we cem in close to shore. All at wanst says Ned to me, 'Stop rowing, man. Shure that's thrumpeting.' 'And who could be thrumpeting heraways?' says I. And as plain as I hear the cock crowing beyont there, sure enough and no mistake, it was thrumpeting we heard. 'Sure 'tis a ship,' says my nephew. 'Where are we at all?' says I, and with that I looks around, and, to the norrard, betune me and the sky, I sees the edges like a saw of the Devil's Leap; and begor! I knew 'twas betune the Devil's Leap and the cliff that we cem, and that forninst us on the starboard bow was Carrig-an-deamhain. And I was that afeared that I couldn't spake or move me hands, and the thrumpeting was playing ever and always.

"The chune, be the same token, was the 'Hare in the Barley,' and be the thrick of it, I knew it was Masther Idward (Edward) that

played, for he had a way of playing it, what the pipers haven't, wid another chune rambling and gladiathoring in and out and round and about the rale chune—variations, he used to call them —for many's the time I heard him. 'Then,' says I, 'for the love of God, boys, and the saving of yer sowls, give way, and you, Con, port the helm, hard.' And 'twas meself pulled wid that onraisonable stringth that, begor I bruk the dowl, and fell agin the mast, and then on the deck. But I was up soon, and rowed agin the sucond dowl; and at the same time the thrumpeting came to an end, and I heard voices and seen a light on the cliff-side. And the ould people they say that the mouth of Hell is there in the side of the cliff, and that the divils go out and in there same as people through a door. And, sir, seeing that——" here the speaker's voice dropped, but I thought I heard the word "heretics" repeated once or twice, nor was the voice raised afterwards sufficiently for me to catch the drift of what was said. But I had heard enough.

CHAPTER X.

THE BRAZEN CHAIN.

BY FRANK FURBISHER.

As Sam was slumbering so profoundly, and as there was no necessity for immediate action, I did not wake him, though I knew now that the key to the whole mystery was perhaps in our hands. That cliff Carrig-an-deamhain, sheer cliff as it was, rising unbroken hundreds of feet from the sea, was in some marvellous and unguessable manner the prison-house of the brothers.

Restraining my excitement as well as I could, I waited till six o'clock, and then awoke Sam. My first question to him was this—

"Did your brother Ned bring a cornopean with him the day that he left home?"

"I believe he did," said Sam, "for I have not seen it since then."

"That settles it," I cried, seizing him by the hands. "I know where they are." Then I told him all. Saying nothing of this to the men, who were greatly surprised at being turned out of their beds or berths at such an unreasonable hour, we rowed out and went straight for that strange cliff. It was past noon when we got there. We came towards it from the south, rowing between a tall cubical rock and certain adjoining cliffs. This passage was what Miah called the Devil's Leap. A little behind there lay on our right a sort of bay, frowned over by great, ragged, black precipices. It was in this cliff-bound bay we had spent so much time on that former occasion to which I have referred. Beyond this bay, running northwards, stretched for about fifty yards the sheer cliff called Carrig-an-deamhain. As we rowed between that cubical rock and the adjoining shore-cliff, little Sam stood up in the stern and, to use his own expression, "gave it to Miah." He was trembling with passion. Such a torrent of fierce abuse I had never yet heard issue from any lips as now poured from Sam's, and

truly the superstitious old fool well deserved it.

Sam was still blazing away at Miah when I caught sight of something, seeing which I started to my feet and caught him by the arm crying, "Look!" There before us, starting from a point more than half-way up the tall cliff and descending towards the water, ran a streak of bright yellow, glistening in the sun's rays and gently undulating. It was a chain of bright brass. At first I fancied that it was an ocular delusion. The men, astonished at Sam's furious tirade, which indeed embraced them all, for no doubt they were all in the secret of Miah's story, had stopped rowing. The drops descended from their oars, dripping on the smooth water. The way which was on the boat was sufficient to carry us forward and under the chain. There the boat came to a stop.

When the men too saw the chain, it was with the utmost difficulty, though it was broad daylight with the sun shining in his strength, that we prevented them from rowing away. They said the chain was not brass at all, but fairy

gold, and that it was all "divilment and witchery."

Sam snatched one of the oars and with it beat the chain, which sent out a deliciously musical ringing, echoed by the cliffs and the adjoining caves. The "fairy gold" sounded hard and solid. The lower end of this brazen chain was about nine feet from the water. The upper end was attached to a rope which started from a roughened portion of the cliff.

We fired shots, hallooed, and sounded our bugle without eliciting any other response than abundant and truly uncanny echoes from the shores of that adjoining cliff-bound bay to which I have referred, and which was quite perforated, I might almost say honeycombed, with caves. Then we rowed out to sea for a few hundred yards, and after reaching a certain point could perceive that at that roughened part of the cliff there was something like a ledge or platform, and that behind it was a black spot, evidently the mouth of some cavern. These features of the cliff were quite invisible from the base. "Depend upon it," I said,

"your brothers were there, however they got there, and have descended from their prison by this chain. But how did they get such a chain in such a place?"

"They dug out and smelted copper," said Sam. "I dare say they have escaped, but I intend to go up."

Again we rowed under the chain. Sam flung off his coat, also his shoes and stockings, and made one of the men, much against his will, raise him on his shoulders till he could secure a purchase on the chain. Then, hand over hand, and using legs and hands, the plucky and muscular little lad swarmed up, going like a wild-cat or a monkey; afterwards he went more slowly, indeed was obliged to stop several times. On each occasion he thrust his bare toes into the rings so as to give his arms a rest. Then he went on again. I could perceive, however, that his strength was failing. When he reached the end I saw that he was unable to draw himself from the rope over the ledge of rock from which it depended. Here he remained for nearly half an hour while I watched him through my glass.

After making the utmost efforts to get over the ledge, he finally desisted. If anyone recalls what a difficult thing it is to clamber, when swimming, from the water into a boat, he will perceive the hopelessless of Sam's efforts to work himself from a rope on to a ledge of rock over which it ran. At this end the chain had terminated in a rope, so that he was no longer able to support himself by thrusting his toes into the links. In short, he could not get over that ledge, and yet he did not come down. What was he doing? I could see that clearly through my perspective. Supporting himself by twisting his legs round the rope, he appeared to be making a sketch of something there, for I saw the gleam of white paper in his hands, and he looked up and down as one does when sketching.

When he came down he showed me the envelope of a letter inscribed with pencil-marks. He told me he had copied it very carefully from an inscription in printed letters, written with some black substance upon a broad streak or vein of quartz, which traversed the cliff-side

above the ledge. He knew it was Latin, for that the first word *fons* was a fountain. He knew it was Jack's work, for Jack was fond of scribbling in Latin. Sam's copy, owing to his constrained position while making it, was to me quite undecipherable, though not to him, for he was sure, he said, of all the letters, though the thing itself was "High Dutch" to him. When he had explained all the characters, and I had written out a fair copy, I perceived that the script was an elegiac Latin couplet, hexameter and pentameter all complete. They were evidently the work of a very forward schoolboy, who had had much practice in the art of Latin versification, and they ran as follows :—

"Pons defecit aquæ; post hoc ne quære viator.
Viximus heu nostri nunc habet ossa mare,"

which in English would run as follows :—"The fountain of water ran dry. Beyond this, O traveller, do not enquire. Once we were alive. Now, of us, alas! sea holds the bones."

CHAPTER XI.

A SHORT BUT IMPORTANT CHAPTER.

BY FRANK FURBISHER.

"Too late!" I cried, letting the paper fall from my hands.

"Too late!" echoed Sam, but sarcastically, and added a full-blown Irish bull. "If the writing said 'We are both as dead as red herrings,' I would not believe it. You see, Furbisher, I know those fellows and you don't. I tell you again, nothing would kill them. That brass chain, however they got it, is their work. They came down by the chain yesterday, and to-day we shall probably find them at home before us, warming their shin-bones before the fire and in capital spirits, and *they will chaff us.* Give way there, lads. 'Now of us sea holds the bones.'" Though not given to laughter, Sam laughed scornfully now, and added a

curious Irish ejaculation, which might be translated " Walker !"

I confess I by no means shared my friend's cheerful humour.

Many were our debatings during the long row home concerning all the possible mysteries and marvels which the facts suggested. When, after two days, we reached Dun-Beacon, Sam's countenance fell considerably when he learned that his brothers were not home before him, and that no news had been received from them. We now resolved to tell everything to the chief of the coastguards. Then we started for a second exploration. This time we purposed to descend from the cliffs above, upon that ledge over which Sam could not climb, and brought with us the necessary materials. We paid off the fishermen, and had coastguards for our crew. The coastguard cutter too was ordered out to sail about amongst the contiguous islands and make enquiries; but as there was hardly any wind, the weather being still bright and frosty, while such as there was blew from the south, her progress was slow, and we left her behind.

We had barely rounded the Rohar promontory, when through my glasses I saw far away southwards what seemed to be a raft and sail. On the raft were two tatterdemalion figures.

"What do you make of that?" I said to Sam, at the same time handing him the glass.

Sam had hardly looked at this object when he laid down the glass, and turning to me with an indescribable expression, said—

"Well, this is a sell!"

"What do you mean?"

"Those are they," said he, "and looking well too, but, by Jove, they are awfully badly dressed; and now I bet anything that they won't pay salvage. They will say 'We came home on our own hook, and wanted no assistance from anyone.'"

Sam was right at least as to the identity of the two figures. They were the lost boys.

I now direct the reader's attention to the narrative in which John Freeman relates the singular adventures and experience which had befallen himself and his brother since they left home.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE DAWN OF THE DAY.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

ONE exceedingly fine morning in July, my younger brother and myself left home, intending to spend the whole day on the water, and return late at night. We did not return at all that night, or the next day, or the day after. We did not return until we had met with adventures as singular, I think, as ever befell any pair of boys in the world. I was a schoolboy, but home for the holidays; my brother Ned was being educated at home by a tutor. But it was holiday time with him too, though the tutor was still working little Sam.

That morning I awoke while it was still nearly dark. I believe I was awaked by the sparrows, for I heard them twittering furiously

about the eaves close to our window, which was wide open. Ned lay by my side sound asleep. I was surprised to find myself so wide awake all of an instant, so alert, and fresh, and ready for anything. I sprang from bed and leaned out of the window. The pressure of my elbows on the sash, driving it quite home, made a noise which was enough to wake the dogs. They issued, barking in an animated manner, from various stables and out-offices, where they had passed the night in hay. Without raising my voice, I succeeded in reducing them to silence. So they stood there, dumbly looking up at me with all their tails going together—a comical sight. It was still gray dawn, the dawn of what promised to be a beautiful day. The air was charged with all manner of sweet odours, particularly the scent of new-mown hay. Our bedroom opened upon the back premises, beyond which was a meadow. It had been mown the previous day. The outline of the distant hills was beginning to show faintly in the growing light. I felt a great longing to do something spirited and unusual this day, the more so as

my vacation was just running out. I wished to signalise the day by some famous escapade or adventure; and indeed my foolish wish was granted, in over-abundant measure, and in a way which neither I nor anyone else could have guessed. I thought of the various things that I might do: (1) shoot grouse along the brown slopes of the mountain called Maulin; I knew of three packs there not yet touched; (2) drive to Lough Katherine, ten miles away, and spend the day there fishing trout with an otter; (3) hunt the real otter with my dogs in the Pulleen river, where were several; (4) dig out a badger on Cnoc-an-Dree, the Druid's Hill; or (5) stow away rods, lines, provisions, and fresh water in our big boat, and spend the livelong day on the salt sea, inhaling the glorious airs and odours of the great Atlantic. I had spent most of the previous day reading a novel, and was determined not to repeat that mistake. I would spend the whole of this day away from home, whatever I might finally resolve to do, if only rat-hunting with my terriers along the banks of the little river which flowed past the

Glebe. In the end I decided for the fifth of my choice of amusements. Then I shook Ned vigorously, and even pinched him well.

Ned, as soon as his drowsiness was quite abolished by my rough treatment, entered at once and with zeal into my plan, viz.—the live-long day upon the sea.

"We must get off at once," he said, "before the youngsters awake. They would want to go with us, and of course we can't be bothered with them. I shall look after the prog while you attend to the rods and lines. Bring the gun too. We can get turf from old Darby's rick near the coos, for fuel, and so save trouble."

We dressed rapidly, and Ned went off to rummage about the house for provender—not so silently, however, that I did not hear things thrown down and clattering in distant places; and quaked lest I should hear also my father's voice raised first in authoritative inquiry, and then with a peremptory command to postpone the expedition till after breakfast. My father was not indeed so anxious to see us all assembled at the breakfast-table, but he was apt to notice

absence at morning family prayers, which partook of the nature of a solemn and long religious service. I knew very well that if my father awoke everything would be spoiled, and, though I did not use profane language, muttered strong expressions every time I heard Ned create a clatter. Ned's behaviour was indeed abominable, and resembled that of a bull in a china shop. I dare say he was not clumsier than I would have been myself, but in the extreme stillness of the morning, even the creaking of his basket, whenever he opened the lid, sounded like thunder.

At last Ned emerged with his basket out of the kitchen and scullery regions into the hall. Here we stood together for a moment listening. There was not a sound to be heard anywhere. Then we put on our big topcoats, knowing from many experiences how comfortable they would be upon the water after nightfall. I went into the study, and took thence a book which I thought was a history of Henry Fifth's French Wars, but which turned out to be a very different work indeed, and destined unex-

pectedly to play a great part in our boyish tragedy. I beg the reader not to forget this book which looked like, but was not, a book of romantic history. Taking care to forget nothing which we might require, we escaped from the house somewhat after the manner of Christian and Hopeful from Doubting Castle; but, unlike those worthies, we found no closed door barring our progress. The hall-door was wide open. Indeed in fine weather I think it was never shut by night or by day, but was like the gates of the Temple of Janus in war-time. I live now here in Victoria, amongst a people who think themselves highly civilised and great masters of the art of living, yet at night I fasten all doors and loose three mastiffs. Ireland was not a bad country to live in when I was a boy.

The last home sound that I heard was the mournful cry of a dog called Ranger, which was so lugubrious that it made me uncomfortable. I thought of it afterwards, and of the common notion that such noises are harbingers of woe. On the road we met with another bad omen, viz. a red-haired woman, a rather celebrated person

in the neighbourhood, called Moll Rue. Her occupation was that of compounder of medicines. She kept a pestle and mortar like any apothecary. My father used to call her an old beldam, whatever that means; but I suspect that my mother secretly used the services of this unlicensed practitioner for washes, herb-salves, and I know not what. Moll Rue had, I suppose, been picking simples this morning.

"Aren't ye afeared to go on," she said, "after meeting me this way?"

"Are you not afraid to go on yourself after meeting us?" said Ned, who was quick at a reply.

She only answered, "Yerra, don't be makin' game of me now, darlings, but go home agin, or ye'll repint it."

Ned made some other chaffing remark; we laughed and stepped on. Looking back, I saw Moll standing in the middle of the road, and gazing after us.

Perhaps it is not generally known that in parts of Ireland to meet a red-haired woman in the morning is considered unlucky.

When we reached the coos, which is the West of Ireland name for a small harbour, we drew in our boat by the stern to a rock which was called Corrig-y-Skame or the Rock of the Leap. Someone made a great leap here once. I believe it was a young man whose name was Finn.

Our boat was called the Old Rake, a boat built for strength rather than speed. She was of great size—big, thick, and clumsy. The oars were not leathered, but at the place where they worked in the rowlocks had four short boards nailed upon them, so that that part of the oar looked as if it were enclosed in a box. I often thought of leathering those oars like the oars of the Coastguard's boat, but always found that the local shoemaker charged too much for the job. Indeed, I had very little pocket-money in those days, and as the leathering of the oars tended to ornament rather than use, always postponed that improvement. In fact, we never arrived at the dignity of leathered oars. The Old Rake was moored in the coos, but moored in such a manner that by a rope attached to the shore we could draw in her stern close enough to Corrig-

y-Skame to get on board. The mooring of the Old Rake was always a nice operation. She had to be moored near enough to enable us to get on board, and yet not so near as to permit her to be battered against the rock should the wind blow strong from the south.

She was decked a little in the bows, having been once a sailing-boat. Our father steadily refused to give us a more manageable row-boat. A boat like this, he said, was safest for boys. Indeed, it would take something like a hurricane to capsize the Old Rake, and a hurricane did not capsize her. There was a large pot in the boat; it was never moved. Its chief aim and end was to hold fire. The men who were in the habit of rowing us used to keep burning sods of turf in that pot, so that they might have always at hand the means of "reddening" their pipes. Matches were not a luxury for fishermen and cotters in those days and on our coast. That pot played a great and beneficent part in our approaching tragedy. While I was stowing away the things Ned stepped to an adjoining turf-rick and returned with an armful of

sods. Just before pushing off I said to him, "We have no priest; get one out of the other boats."

A priest, I must explain, was only a thick, short club used for killing any large fish whose flounderings and floppings after being hauled on board might cause inconvenience. Ned went round amongst the boats drawn up on the strand and returned with a hatchet. The boat carpenter had left it behind him in one of the boats which he had been repairing. It may be imagined from this that we were privileged youngsters. Ned took Old Darby's turf and the boat carpenter's hatchet partly because we were allowed to do much as we pleased by our good-natured neighbours; partly in consequence of a sort of rude communism which prevailed here in this primitive region. We were afterwards very glad to have that hatchet, and made a better use of it than in administering the last rites to inconveniently active fishes.

Then we put off from Corrig-y-Skame, projected thence by a vigorous push from one of Ned's long legs. We hauled up the anchor,

which was only a large stone, rowed out of the coos over the glimmering water, for it was still only dawn, and then hoisted the sail. My father steadily refused to give us a sail. We had a sail nevertheless, but we kept it carefully out of sight. We never hoisted it except, as now, when he was asleep, or when he was away from home, or gone off upon a distant pastoral visit. The sail was only a large blanket, but of sound and strong material.

So sailing was with us a surreptitious, therefore keen pleasure. Our blanket sail, too, saved us many an hour's hard tugging at the oar, when oarsmen, as sometimes happened, were not procurable. It is still a wonder to me, and indeed somewhat a cause of shame, what a lot of rowing we used to get out of the neighbours in those days free, gratis, and for nothing. Quite as a matter of course, I used to go out in the morning or noontide, or in the evening, and say, "Darby, or Mike, or Dhonal, I want you to bear a hand with an oar to-day," and, save in great press of haymaking or some other agricultural exigency, the response was an in-

variable and cheerful "To you, sir," or "I'm wid yer honour," or some cordial expression of the kind. Not till I had entered College, and begun to consider the nature of my actions, did it ever occur to me—or indeed I think to them, poor fellows—that for so much work done, *I* ought to make a more reasonable return. But, indeed, none of our people set much value on time. To-day I had asked for no volunteers. I thought that Ned and myself would be happier alone, and knew too that the stress of after-grass haymaking was considerable. So we hoisted sail, or rather blanket, and slowly glided on past the wild rock-bound coast which prevailed here. Then I got out the lines for pollock, three in all, one on each side of the boat, and one near the tiller. Two were sunk, one was afloat, and all baited with eels, which had been forked a few days before by me in a little stream which ran at the bottom of our lawn. Oftentimes, after spending the day so, with my feet in cold water, I spent the evening in hot, when my mother found her forks, sometimes her silver forks, all bent and crumpled from my

stabbings at the eels or trout which abounded in that little stream. Curiously enough, I had a letter from her the other day, in which she wrote, "I have three silver forks which you quite ruined. I would not change them now for forks of gold, and yet I remember being so angry with you when you brought them home misused in that shocking manner." I recall this sometimes when my own youngsters injure valuable articles.

So we went forth that lovely July morning, happy and hopeful, intending many things, which, as Homer says, "the gods had resolved should never be accomplished."

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ARMY OF GIANTS RUNNING.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

THOUGH the wind was hardly noticeable, it was enough to give the boat way, and enable her to answer the helm. It blew, so far as it blew at all, from the east. So we held away westward, along the base of a high smooth cliff, with which it was destined that some years later I should make a singular acquaintance, but concerning which I must say no more here. Pollock are a fish which are only taken in the vicinity of rocks; so we hugged the base of this cliff, having just sufficient way on for fishing purposes. Having passed some good feeding-grounds without even a tug, I wound up the lines upon their clumsy square reels, and got my rod in readiness, bidding Ned do the same.

I mounted an eel upon mine; Ned mounted a goose-feather. One cannot tell beforehand which will please the fish best. If they are taking, the hand-line is superior to the rod, for in that case there is no time lost in playing the fish. You just haul him in hand over hand, and fling back into the water your eel or feather the moment you have disengaged your fish from the hook. On the other hand, if the fish are not voraciously inclined, the rod is the best. As you can play the fish with the rod, you can then use lighter and less alarming tackle. Our change of tactics was successful. Before we came to the end of that long steep cliff, and were opposite the rock called Du-Corrig, Ned had cleverly played and successfully brought on board a magnificent pollock, which made four gallant rushes before, he gave out, and I, without any exhibition of art or science, had taken in three creehogues. The creehogue, I may mention for the benefit of those who have never enjoyed this excellent sport, is a young pollock.

Passing Du-Corrig, the point at which the great steep cliff terminated, we skirted a broken,

jagged, and iron-bound shore, moving steadily westwards, and had good sport until the sun showed a quarter of his red disc over the line of hills eastward.

Ned, who was not such an ardent fisherman as myself, cried out: "Here comes the jolly old sun."

"Worse luck," said I; "I wish he had stayed in bed an hour longer."

Soon the fish quite ceased to bite. Eventually, when during a whole half-hour I had taken nothing, I reeled in my line, bidding Ned do the same, which he did, with the result of finding a quite dead cuillog, almost amounting to the dignity of a creehogue, upon one of his three flies.

Near the point where we reeled up our lines, there was a cave, terminating in a little pebbly strand. Here we put in, ran the boat ashore, kindled a fire and breakfasted. Old Darby's sods of turf supplied the fuel. Kindling we had none. Turf broken fine made the kindling. This is an advantage which turf possesses over coal. In order to light a fire of coal you require

either an enormous quantity of paper or sticks. You can light a turf fire, using the turf itself for kindling. Here, on the steep strand of small round stones, and under the dark echoing roof, we boiled our kettle, made tea, and broiled a pollock upon the red turf coals. So we made a good breakfast of roast fish and bread and butter with tin porringers of tea.

After this we resolved to set our lobster and crab-pots, which we baited with the creehogues that we had just caught. The wind had fallen now to a dead calm, consequently it was of no use to hoist the blanket. We had to row to the lobster grounds, which were nearly a mile off, and this, with our heavy oars, heavy boat, and the sun beginning to shine in his strength, was no easy task. From the lobster grounds we rowed back to shore, passed under a great arch called Bonaparte's Bridge, and into a cave called the Cave of the Mermaids. Here Ned went to sleep, while I with an oar kept the Old Rake from breaking her sides against the rocks. The coolness was very refreshing, for outside the heat was nearly unendurable. I amused

myself here by fishing for crabs, of which I caught several, and one pickie-dog or dog-fish, which I threw out after "priesting" him well with the hatchet. After three delightfully peaceful, sleepy, and serene hours spent in this fashion, Ned slumbering nearly all the time like an infant in the bottom of the boat, I awoke him, and we rowed out to draw up our traps, in which we found a good number of lively crustaceans. Baiting our traps a second time, we bathed, plunging out of the Old Rake, splashing about uproariously, and clambering in again with great difficulty, and at the expense of sore knees and elbows.

After this, in a place about three-quarters of a mile further on, we set spillars, which on other parts of the coast are called long lines, baiting them chiefly with crab. The sun being still very hot, we rowed ashore again to the Cave of the Mermaids. There was no strand here, but there was a little ledge or shelf close to the water's edge, on which we built and kindled a fire, and boiled a pot of potatoes, fish, and a lobster. Ned's basket contained the greater

part of a roast shoulder of mutton, so that we dined in style, having at least two courses, and also a third, which consisted of bread and gooseberry jam. By the way, potatoes never taste so well as when they are boiled in salt water. It was now two o'clock.

After dinner, we amused ourselves by shouting for echoes. Possibly the place was called the Mermaid's Cave on account of the excellent echoes which it produced. The ancient Greeks held that Echo was a girl who had her abode among the rocks. The country people on our coast believed that Echo was a boy. They called him Mac-an-alla, "Son of the Cliff."

It was nearly four o'clock when we rowed out to draw our spillars. There was not a breath of air stirring. The air, in fact, was singularly thick and heavy, and seemed difficult to breathe. The sky, instead of being blue, as it should be, was copper-coloured, and there were curious gleams on the water. The sea was smooth and unrippled, but was heaving in long broad swells, as if uneasy in its mind without knowing the cause.

We hauled in the spillars. To those who love sea-fishing as I used to love it, there is something singularly exciting in the up-drawing of spillars. You can never tell what you will find on the hooks, or whether you will find anything. You try to penetrate with your eyes the green abysmal depths of the sea to discover what is coming. You think you see a faint transitory gleam. Possibly 'tis a delusion, possibly not. Then again you see clearly, but in flashes, indubitable signs of something white coming. They come from the white belly of some fish, uncertain yet what fish. At last he comes into clearer view. He may be only a pickie-dog, but also he may be a plaice, a sole, or even a noble turbot, or a gilded John Dory. Again, he may be a spacious ray or a skate as big as a table, and all useless save the wings, which are good to eat, and something like a crab in taste. On the present occasion we were surprised to find very little on our hooks save star-fish. Half a dozen tamblings and plaice only rewarded our exertions. We baited the lines afresh, and

decided to row home to our own coos, in order to get oarsmen so as to spend the evening pollock-fishing with flies.

I ought to have known that something unusual was about to take place, so singular were all the symptoms of sea and sky. I drew no conclusions, however, from these phenomena, or from the extraordinary sultriness of the atmosphere and the dullness of the sun, at which I could gaze without difficulty, though he was yet hours from his setting.

As we turned the boat's stern westward, I saw a curious spectacle, the significance of which I was still fool enough not to guess, viz. flocks of sea-birds flying shoreward out of the Atlantic, and rushing in vast multitudes over our heads with loud cries. I thought that further up the coast there might be great schools of fish, and regretted that the seine-boats and seine-men of our little harbour were not out this evening. The copper-coloured hue of the sky deepened, and other curious and fast-changing hues showed in heaven and on the sea. At last quite suddenly the thought arose in my mind, "This

is a hurricane. We must row for our lives." I heard, still far away, a sound like low thunder or the trampling feet of an army of giants running. Yet still there was not a breath of air stirring, and the thickness and sultriness of the air seemed to increase.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE MERCY OF THE HURRICANE.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

I SHOUTED to Ned to row all he knew, and myself rowed with such fury that I turned the boat quite round. Then I stood up and looked about me. Far away seaward I saw the water perfectly white, and also perceived that the belt of frothing water was widening and swiftly approaching us. "It is a hurricane, Ned," I cried; "in with your oars." I ran to the stem, unfastened the stone anchor from the rope, and flung it overboard. Owing to those furious oar-strokes of mine, the boat's stem, which previously pointed eastward, was now turned straight in the direction of that terrible advance from the Atlantic of the genii of the storm. I tore up the thwarts, seized every

available piece of timber in the boat, including the oars, bound all tightly to the anchoring rope, and flung them overboard. My object, of course, was to secure that the boat's stem should continue to be pointed to the storm. An old fisherman once told me of that trick, and I now luckily remembered it. Then the white hurricane burst upon us, sending in advance flakes of foam as thick as a snow-storm. At first there were no waves. The sea was perfectly level, but all a perfect sheet of white foam. So furious was the gale, that for a few seconds I could breathe only with the greatest difficulty. The wind seemed a great solid wall pressing in against me. Then the waves rose, and continued to rise till the sea ran in mountains. Though the sun was still high in the heavens, and, strange to say, unobscured by clouds, the sky darkened. Sometimes we were on the top of rolling white mountains, sometimes in valleys as black as the shifting crests of the mountains were white. Though the storm momentarily grew more terrible, I had now recovered from my panic, and was quite cool and

collected. I even began to think that we had a good chance of saving our lives. The breakwater of timber was doubly serviceable. It broke the fury of the waves, and it held the boat's nose straight to the very eye of the storm. If a single wave, one of the chopping variety which roughened the crests of those huge, rolling water mountains, were to catch us on the beam, it would have been all over with the Old Rake and with us. The main danger for the present arose from the quantities of mingled water and foam which continued to be flung over the bows, or to descend upon us out of the air. Against this our only resource was constant baling. We were both strong and vigorous, and worked as we probably never worked before, and have never worked since. The great three-legged pot already referred to proved now the means of saving our lives. But for it we would have been swamped. Ordinary balers would have been useless against the masses of water which continued to fall into the boat. The pot too, most fortunately, had its hanger. When emptying it, I held the hanger

with the right hand, and one of its three legs with the left. If it had not been such a truly rural vessel, affording me such an excellent purchase for effective work, I am certain the inpour of water would have gained on us. Ned at first worked with the boat's baler and one of the tin porringers, but in obedience to a sign from me, dropped them, and baled with the kettle, which was more capacious; but the mouth of the kettle, not being of course as wide as the vessel itself, I am not certain whether the change was for the better. Presently I perceived that in this respect we were masters of the situation, and that though the masses of water flung in upon us were increasing in bulk, we had still a counter reserve of baling power upon which to draw, thanks mainly to the wide-lipped tripod. One often hears the expression, "the howl of the storm," also "the whistling of the gale." The expressions may be appropriate in the mouth of one who had experienced a storm on a ship, whose bulk and rigging supply solid resistance to the wind. The sound which I now heard was neither a howl nor a

whistling, but resembled rather the ringing of a vast number of little bells, very high and clear, shrill, intensely mournful, melodious even, falling and rising at a great altitude of tone.

I said that I had begun to think we might yet escape. I felt that unless a greater proportion of water was flung on board, we could not be swamped while the Old Rake rose so gallantly to each wave, broken too, as each wave was by our breakwater. I did not anticipate instantaneous submergence as long as our tackle held together. The hurricane blew almost straight from the west, in from the Atlantic. At the moment when it burst upon us we were nearly a mile off shore, viz. the shore along which we had been lazily moving all the forenoon till now This shore faced due south. Consequently, as the wind blew from the west—west by north-west as I calculated—we were being now driven along a course nearly parallel with the shore. I saw that we could not be driven upon the rocks of this shore, and I knew that the shore lying to the east of our own coos was shelving and sandy. Therefore, if we

could keep down the water, and if no big wave broke over us, we would be driven ashore safely. Having gained decidedly upon the water, I now by signs directed Ned to tie my right arm and wrist to the hanger of the pot. While he was making me fast in this manner I gave him to understand that we were doing well, and that there was no danger.

Hardly had this operation been completed when the wind fell quite suddenly, but I was now too wide awake and suspicious to imagine that our great elemental enemies had done with us. "Tear out that thwart, Ned," I cried, "and go to the stern with it. Keep her head to the wind." Ned could not tear out the thwart. I came to his assistance. In spite of the pot, to which I was still attached, together we succeeded in wrenching it out. In doing so I fell back against the gunwale and hurt myself, but I was not aware of it at the time. Ned, who was beautifully calm and collected through all this business, went to the stern, projected the thwart, and held himself in readiness to turn the boat's nose in any direction. It was a poor

substitute for an oar, but plied well at the stern, would have a good deal of power. The calm which now prevailed lasted, I think, about as long as it would require to boil an egg. Then quite suddenly furious puffs of air coming with intermittent force blew from the south. My heart sank. A wind from the south would blow us straight in upon the rocks. However, without any intermediate gradations, the hurricane burst suddenly upon us again—this time from the north. Ned, obeying my directions, or rather indeed the dictates of his own common-sense, had made a few strokes with his thwart, and half turned the boat's stern southwards when this unexpected shifting of the wind took place. We were saved on this occasion by Ned's instinct. As if he knew that those puffs from the south were a *ruse* on the part of the enemy, he reversed his first work, caused the boat to face westwards again, and before the hurricane blew in its fury from the north, had effectually turned her in that direction. Had the wind taken us full on the beam, he could never have got her head round at all, and in

a few moments the waves, running now from the north southwards, would have rolled over the starboard gunwale and swamped us. When the hurricane descended upon us from the north, the boat, thanks to Ned's prescience, and Ned's activity and skilful use of his thwart, pointed in the eye of the wind.

As we had previously been driven eastward, so we were now driven as helplessly but more dangerously to the south. Before us, though now invisible owing to the pervading darkness, were the cliffs of Rohar, a gigantic wall of stone running east and west, and terminating in half a dozen isolated black rocks called the Pipers. Towards the cliffs of Rohar we were being now driven hopelessly.

When the hurricane, altering its direction, began to blow from the north, we were to some extent under the protection of our own promontory, which, being high and mountainous, broke the great fury of the blast. But the value of this defence was momentarily lessening, as we were being driven more outside the area of its protection, and ere long the inrush of water,

though I baled with a fierce energy commensurate with the greatness of the peril, almost reduced me to despair. I felt that I had now no longer any reserve of strength upon which to draw, and that, though I was doing my very best, the water gained upon us. When the water had almost reached the fixing-place of the thwarts I signed to Ned to drop his kettle, and assist me with the pot. My strength was giving way. The weight of that great vessel filled with water was beginning to be too much. Also the gale blew so furiously that I was with difficulty able to stand up against it. More than once I was flung down as I rose to empty the vessel over the boat's side. If the hanger had not been made fast to my arms, I would have lost the pot at this time. Ned's assistance now in lifting the big baler was a great relief to me, and after an anxious few minutes, when it seemed a sheer toss-up whether we were to go down or not, I had the satisfaction of finding the water-line in the boat steadily descending. The fury of the gale too at this time perceptibly abated, with, of course, a corresponding dimi-

nution of the quantity of water flung on board. When, by working together in the manner which I have described, we had effectively lightened the boat, I paused for a while and looked around. The wind blew now from the north-east, and was driving us not upon that great wall of stone, *i.e.* the cliffs of Rohar, but towards those isolated rocks at its western extremity which our fishermen called the Pipers. They were invisible, but the place where they stood was distinguishable enough, for it was all one boiling, seething mass of foam. The Pipers seemed to me to be about a mile distant, but in a scene so wild, strange, and terrible, it was impossible to gauge distances with certainty. What was certain was that we were being driven straight upon those terrible rocks. But there was still hope. The wind had shifted from north to north-east, and might be still shifting in the same direction. If it shifted but a point further, we would clear the Pipers. I had no time to make any further observations, for the water in the boat was again almost knee-deep. We had now to con-

tend against fresh water as well as salt, for the rain began to fall in torrents, and it grew quite dark. Suddenly an appalling clap of thunder pealed in my ears, and quite simultaneously I was almost blinded with lightning. For one moment I lost heart.

"We have done our best," I said; "we cannot outlive such a storm as this. Were it not better to die at once and in peace, saying our last prayers?" That abjectness, however, only lasted for a few moments—perhaps half a minute. Ned was literally thunderstruck, and quite confounded. When I looked towards him he was sitting deep in water, grasping the gunwales tightly with both his hands and staring at the sky. Two flashes now came in rapid succession. I saw that neither flash caused the least change of expression in Ned's face. He was dazed and stupefied by the horror of the situation. Then the thunder began to roar in one long, continuous peal, and the lightnings flashed in a manner that I can only compare with the alternate darkenings and outflashings of a quick-revolving lamp of a lighthouse.

Suddenly I heard, or thought I heard, a third sound mingling with that shrill ringing of the hurricane and the reports and reverberations of the thunder. It was a low, hollow, booming sound. I looked around me. But for the lightning all was now black as pitch, though I believe it was still day. Then another blazing flash revealed to me a vast mass of tossing foam whiter than snow, and through that glittering whiteness some black object emerging horribly, all this upon the starboard gunwale. I knew at once the significance of the spectacle. We were grazing the Pipers. We were being driven past those spikes of death, and beyond us lay nothing but the unobstructed ocean. Now, if we could only keep down the water, we might yet overlive the storm. I leaned down to Ned, and struck him sharply on the face with my left hand, at the same time crying in his ear—"Saved, Ned, saved! only bale." That stinging blow, and that word of hope and call for action, brought Ned to his senses. Again we struggled with the huge baler, and again succeeded in lightening the

boat, which was on the point of being swamped. The rain was still falling like a deluge, but the claps of thunder grew intermittent, and after a while ceased. The fury of the gale too abated. If its full force were now expended, I believed that we had strength enough left to keep the boat seaworthy.

We baled intermittently, husbanding our strength. For continuous and furious baling, there was no longer any necessity. From what direction it blew now I could not tell, owing to the darkness. I could not tell what hour of the night it was, having completely lost all count of time, and it was too dark for me to see the hands of my watch. I listened attentively, but could nowhere distinguish the boom of breakers. That was a good feature of the situation. It showed that we were well away from the shore. Where we were I knew not, knew only that we must be a great many miles from any part of the coast with which I was acquainted.

The gale now abated to such a degree that there was no longer any occasion for baling at all. I drew my penknife and cut the cords

which bound my arm to the hanger of the pot. We were now able to converse, and communicated to each other our fears and hopes. As it was probable that we were being driven out to sea, the question of provisions and fresh water was of importance. On that head we had not much to fear. There were plenty of fish still in the boat, though many of the smaller ones had got into the pot while I was baling, and had been flung overboard. Most of them, however, had been by me at an early period thrust under the stern flooring, and were there still, the aperture not being large enough to enable them to escape, even when the boat was half full of water. Of fresh water in the jar there was not much, but in a region so pluvious as the Atlantic seaboard of Ireland, we fancied that we would soon be able to secure a good supply.

CHAPTER XV.

SPIKED.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

So we reasoned together in our folly, supposing that, so far as the elements were concerned, the worst was now over. The worst in fact was yet to come. The storm-fiends having failed to destroy us, were bringing up their reserves.

Now for some time I had been listening to the low brool of thunder heard at a great distance. I thought it was the sullen roar of that which had so recently been bursting over our heads. It was, in fact, the van of a new thunderstorm, a thunderstorm which was rushing along straight in the eye of the wind. These approaching thunder-claps grew louder and clearer, while in the direction from which they came there was seen an almost continuous

blaze of electric flame. A great deal of it was sheet lightning, which blazed and went out, blazed and went out, without at any time five seconds between the flashes. Sometimes the blaze seemed to rush upwards from the sea into the sky like volcanic explosions. But the deadly, so-called forked lightning was active there too. Such lightning, I am now convinced, is not forked at all, but serpentine, or like the track of rivers as marked on maps. The flashes were actually more like little snakes than anything else. There was a frightful significance in those little deadly, wriggling things, the concentrated essence of malignity and destructive force. Then all this terrible array of prodigious elemental power — the thunder, the sheet lightning and the forked—were swiftly advancing upon us. It was like the swift and headlong rush of an embattled army, with field music, banners, and the roar of artillery and musketry, to annihilate a beaten foe. Nearer and nearer rolled this mighty phenomenon. For some time I had been lost in admiration and wonder, only contemplating its grandeur

with awe-stricken heart. Then I suddenly recollected that in the blaze of electricity I should now be able to make out our position with respect to the land. I looked around me, and saw quite close a line of black cliffs, which, lit up by the electrical conflagration, showed out as clearly as they would in the light of the noonday sun, with acres of boiling foam rising and falling at their base. I could see all the little hollows and projections of those cliffs, and the water rushing in streams from ledges and cavities, when the vast breakers, having risen more than half-way to the summits, sank down with a horrible down-rushing into the depth, filling my heart with a certain sickening sensation. I perceived too, and for a moment with a feeling like despair, that the gale, blowing now apparently from the west, was driving us straight upon these stupendous steeps. We were already surrounded by the foam of the broken billows. Simultaneously the full burst of the thunderstorm fell upon and encompassed us. The thunder was now almost continuous, pealing, crashing, and cracking like the ripping

up of innumerable Titanic sails, or as if all the artillery of the world were going off around us. The blaze of electricity was, too, almost continuous, so that the darkness came as it were in flashes. Not the lightning flashed now, but the darkness—and such darkness! Yet the thunderstorm, which was the second that we had experienced, had for us now lost its horrors. It was those awful cliffs upon which we were driven—those black, streaming rocks that now fascinated our imaginations. I forgot all about heaven's artillery, and heaven's lightning bolts, in the thought of those appalling cliffs, standing there so mute and motionless, like monsters waiting to devour us.

To these now, minute after minute—and such minutes—we steadily drew nigh. There before us, stark, black, and grim, hungry for our lives, stood Death waiting for us. There Death gazed upon us and we upon him as the awful minutes went by.

Then we entered the great belt of foam. Ned looked at me, expecting some order, but I would not meet his eye. I kept my gaze fixed steadily

upon the gigantic cliffs. Indeed my object partly was to familiarise my mind with their horror, so that in the supreme moment I should not give myself up a prey to shrieking frenzy of fear. We had already faced Death upon the sea, when he seemed to be as near to us as he was now, and faced him without fear. But here he stood girt with terrors and horrors such as even in imagination I had never realised. The awful up-climbing of the white breakers, and their still more horrible down-rushing as they left the huge rocks bare, were most appalling. I now took Ned by the hand, and waiting till the thunder for a moment intermitted its roar, I shouted in his ear, "All over, Ned! For God's sake don't shriek. Keep your eyes on the rocks; they will steady you." He did as I desired. I expected now every moment would be our last. We had not, indeed, as yet been brought close to the perpendicular rocks, but in the back-wash of the water we had been drawn down so low that I was surprised we had not struck against rocks at the bottom. Then one huge roller carried us so close to the cliff

that I could almost have leaped against it. I know not why, but at this moment I felt actually gay, not only perfect master of all my faculties, but conscious that all those faculties were at their highest point of efficiency. I felt myself preternaturally wide awake and alert, and, as it were, rejoicing in the situation. Soldiers sometimes in battle, I fancy, must feel some such preternatural exhilaration. All the fears and terrors which I had warred down transformed themselves now into modes of strength and mental vigour and activity. Afterwards, comparing experiences with Ned, I found that he had been affected in a similar manner. He said he felt a strong desire to leap out and dance upon the foam. In the multitude of strange ideas which now crowded and flashed through my mind, was a mental picture of the much-enduring Ulysses flung, like us, upon his Ithacan cliffs, holding on there with hooked hands. Why, I thought, should not Ned and I do that feat as well as he, and more successfully? Everything now had become strange, unreal, and unearthly to my excited imagina-

tion. The crashing thunder peals, the almost ceaseless blazing of the lightnings, the roar of the breakers, the hissing of the limitless white foam, the near presence of death, the awful walls of rock, all combined, flung me into a state of mind wilder and more ecstatic than I have ever since experienced, and yet through all I was distinctly conscious of an extraordinary lucidity of intellect and clear apprehension of surroundings.

Then the next great billow out of the Atlantic caught the boat, and rushed it forward towards the cliff. This time we were brought quite close to the cliff, and a little to the right of a broken and irregular ledge of rock there, immediately behind which was a chasm or cavity in the face of the cliff, for while all around the rock was illuminated, there was one dark spot there. The stem of the boat still pointed westward, the stern towards the shore. This time the stern of the boat almost grazed the cliff, then suddenly the wave fell, bearing us with it into the abyss. How we were not swamped, or ground to pieces against the rocks below I do not understand.

But once again we rose, half full of water indeed, but unsubmerged, some two hundred yards from the cliff. What I did now was not the result of any thinking or calculation. I saw intuitively, and as if by instinct, what I should do. I believe that in such supreme emergencies some superhuman power comes to the aid of the understanding, and that what is called presence of mind is often only the result of implicit obedience to its prompting. But be that as it may, the moment the boat was steady enough to permit me to move, I resolved to steer her to the left of the point where we had just grazed the cliff—in fact, to steer straight at the rocky ledge, and to put as much way as I possibly could upon the boat, and so drive her upon that jagged and broken ledge of rock. If I could do so, might we not then spring from her upon the ledge before the back-wash commenced to run, and escape the next breaker by getting into the cavity?

There were only two thwarts left; one was the thwart used for stepping the mast. I had purposely spared it, for I knew that if we

weathered the storm we would need our sail. With a swiftness of which at any other time I would have been incapable, I stepped the mast, half hoisted the sail, made fast the halyard, and bade Ned hold the lower ends of the sail with his hands and arms. At the same time I communicated to him my purpose. The sail, with Ned hanging upon it, formed a sort of irregular bulging triangle. I myself, seizing the other thwart, hastened to the bow. To give myself free steering room, I drew my knife, and cut the rope which held our breakwater. As it was this rude but effective contrivance which had hitherto kept the boat's stem in the eye of the wind, we were now in danger of being whirled around and swamped by water rushing over the gunwale. But there was a chance of salvation, a chance like one to a million, in the resolution which I now adopted. I trusted that the sail would hold, that with my thwart as rudder I could keep her before the wind and outrun the following seas. Often in storms like this I had observed how flotsam, such as barrels and beams of timber, have risen on the

crest of a roller to a certain point upon the rocks, and having been withdrawn afar on the back-rush, was again on the crest of the next roller propelled to almost exactly the same point. This, too, would happen to us if we did nothing. Our boat would be driven exactly to the same place in the cliff which we had nearly touched the last time, and would probably strike. If I could alter the direction by only a few yards, the boat would be borne, not against the sheer cliff, but over and on to that ragged ledge, where, God assisting, we might secure a foothold by springing out promptly. It was our one chance of salvation, and surely as poor a one as man ever trusted to. For a moment there was darkness, then the lightning blazed again. I saw the ledge and cavity with glaring distinctness, and with all my power worked the thwart, steering the boat straight thither. We were now rushing forward again with the speed of a racehorse, in the midst of boiling, seething, and crackling foam, but we went faster than the foam. The gale, catching upon the timbers of the boat, and especially

upon the small sail, to the bottom of which my brother held on like a bull-dog, drove us forward with tremendous velocity so that we out-raced the racing roller. The speed enabled me, with my thwart as a steering apparatus, to keep the boat's stern pointed straight. The stern, of course, was still the foremost part; I was steering from the bow. The boat was nearly full of water. Had she been quite full, she would have floated like a bubble in that racing water. I expected every moment to see that rude substitute for a sail blown from the grasp of Ned's poor tired hands and arms, or rent from the gaff, and fluttering in the gale; but it held firm. We rose on the crest of the breaker in the midst of the highest foam. Still I could see the black spot in the cliffs, and steered straight for that. Then again, in one moment, I could see nothing—nothing but the illimitable confusion of foam in whose folds we were involved. So far from being able to spring from the boat, as I had hoped, I could not stir at all. My legs were as if glued together. I was, in fact, almost hip-deep in water. Then we struck

somewhere. I fell with the shock. As for Ned, I could not see him at all. A second later I felt that the boat was receding. I knew that it was now too late. The chance for which I had worked was gone. Slowly, but surely, we were being dragged into the abyss. All was over. I uttered one rapid prayer, and endeavoured in vain to struggle forward through the water to Ned, that we might die together. Then there was a second and more violent collision, but of a different kind from the first. I heard the boat's timbers crack. Before I could quite realise what this meant, I was aware that the boat, just now filled with foaming water, was perfectly empty. I could see her black timbers, and, amidships, Ned prostrate. Then I heard beneath me the vast but diminishing roar, which indicated the subsidence of the mighty breaker on whose crest we had ridden so far. The boat had struck upon, and been jammed between, those pointed spikes of rock which formed the serrated edge of that rocky platform. I do not remember it, but Ned does, that I grasped him by the collar, and dragged

him to the stern and then out of the boat. I suppose I had at the time the superhuman strength which accompanies fever and ecstasy. Then, planting him on his feet, I said, "Follow me, and for your life keep close." At this moment there was a flash of darkness followed by another illumination. I hurried into the cave which it revealed, still holding Ned's hand. We traversed it till we came to the end, where was a vast quantity of gravel. Here our forward course was stayed. After this I remember nothing more. I had fainted.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SITUATION.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

I was aroused by a noise of loud crying and weeping. All this noise came from poor Ned, who, having never before witnessed a faint, was foolish enough to imagine that I was dead. I was aware of the noise, and of Ned's hands on my face and forehead, for some time before I quite took in the situation.

At last I sat up.

"What is the matter with you. Are you ill?" I said.

Poor Ned! All the loud lamentations came to a sudden end like a thread from a spinning-wheel neatly snicked off by scissors. Silence succeeded, but I could hear outside the low, hollow, thunderous boom of the breakers, and,

more faint in the distance, the receding roar of the baffled genii of the storm.

"Are we as high as we can go?" I cried.

"I don't know," he answered.

"We had best get as high as we can," I said, and forthwith I groped and scrambled my way over quantities of shifting and sliding gravel, which as I perceived by the feel was quite wet, and had been, as was plain, quite recently drenched by the enormous breakers lifted up here out of the deep by that terrible hurricane. I shouted to Ned to follow, and still kept scrambling along. I knew that the hurricane had for the moment spent itself, but that at any moment it might rage again, and urge out of the depths of the Atlantic even greater rollers than those which had drenched the loose stones and gravel over which I now scrambled. Obeying the dictates of the commonest prudence, I desired to put as great a distance between us and these rollers as the extent of the cavern would permit. At last I was aware that the stones over which I scrambled were quite dry, and shortly afterwards I found my progress checked

by an obstacle of solid rock. Ned was still close at my heels. I felt along this wall of rock with my hands, first on one side and then on the other, and on the right side discovered a cavity which extended a few yards further and then came to a full stop. We had, in fact, come as far as we could go.

"That will do now, Ned," I said; "we can't go any farther. Let us rest now."

Here then we lay outstretched in the darkness, and both in our dripping clothes fell fast asleep. The thunder was still roaring, the lightning flashing, the gale screaming, and the breakers booming, but we did not hear them. We were out-worn and out-wearied; nothing but the trumpet of doom would have awaked us that night.

Curiously enough, in spite of my hard lodging, which I confess made my bones a little sore, and in spite of my drenched clothes, I awoke from this long and deep sleep with a sense of unusual buoyancy and exhilaration. It may have been the effect of all the electricity, I do not know, but know that I awoke very happy,

alert, and ready for anything. When first I awoke I thought I was in my bed at home. Then I felt beneath me and under my elbow, as I attempted to rise, the hard stones and gravel upon which I had passed the night, and suddenly recalled all the marvellous experiences through which we had both passed. I felt about for Ned; he was close by. I leaned over him and listened to his breathing, which was quiet and regular. Some distance in front of me I saw light, a patch of still golden light on the dark floor of the cave. The day with its full power had plainly arrived, and the splendid sun was somewhere shining gloriously in the heavens, obscured by no cloud, and flinging in here a little golden reminder that the storm was over and gone, our troubles at an end, and all the world alive and gay.

Then I heard, too, the booming of the breakers, which however only sounded in my ears like a delicious, soothing monotone of old ocean's marvellous diapason; old ocean touching gently one of the deep low chords of his magical and many-stringed lyre. I did not

need my favourite poet, John Milton, to remind me that when storms are overblown, "rocks retain a hollow murmur." Then I started to my feet and made for the light. The first sight in the outer world which presented itself to me was the exquisite purity of the blue sky in which here and there clear-edged clouds —*cumuli*—whiter than snow and glistening, calmly reposed. It was still forenoon, for the sun had not reached the zenith. Below, old ocean smiled, laughed rather, with that "innumerable laughter" which the ancients, too, noted, admired, and celebrated. Before me on the left a great and tall rock nearly cubical rose sheer from the sea. There was a narrow strait between it and the mainland. All this I took in at a single glance. Then I noticed, to my intense joy, that the Old Rake—the brave, stout, clumsy old fisherman's yawl, which had borne us safe through that tremendous hurricane, and, snatching us literally out of the jaws of death, had at last lifted us up into this singular perch—up amongst the sea-gulls—was still with us. I had indeed not expected to see

her again, for I believed that some succeeding billow must have torn her from her resting-place on the ledge. I did not know that she was so strongly rock-bound as I now found her to be.

When I was on the water the cave only revealed itself to me as a certain blackness in the black-gray face of the enormous cliff. But there was, as I have mentioned, in front of it a sort of irregular terrace or ledge of broken, jagged, and pointed rocks—that on which I now stood—and where last night amid the blazing of lightnings, the bellowing of thunders, and the dashing of surf, we had been cast away. Between two of these rocks, in a perfect fork, lay the Old Rake, caught as in a vice, with half her length projected over the abyss. Borne inwards and upwards upon that tremendous climbing Atlantic roller, she had first struck the cliff a little on the right side of the cave, struck it with her stern, which was foremost. The stern was staved in by the violence of the shock. This was the first concussion. Then drawn backwards on the reflux of that mighty billow

she had been caught, jammed, and staved in amidships between these pointed rocks where she lay, near half her length from the middle to the bows projected in the air. Had the back-rush of the water carried her even a foot further, she would, no doubt, owing to the weight of the hinder portion, and the rush of all the water into the bows, have toppled over and turned somersault with myself and my brother into the boiling vortices beneath. As Providence would have it, she struck these jagged rocks amidships, and so heavily that the water instantaneously rushed out through the big fissures made in her side timbers. The gunwales, the upper boardings, and the powerful and massy-timbered keel were intact. The lower boardings and the ribs, at the point where the rock-vice closed upon her, had been broken in like an egg-shell. In my delight I cut some wild capers on the ledge, and finished by kissing the dear old yawl, which to me in my delight seemed to smile with responsive enthusiasm. Indeed, at the time, her wet and tarry old timbers were glistening in the sun. I crept as far

as I could over this craggy ledge and looked over. Far beneath me I could see gigantic rollers charging inwards, rollers so vast that it seemed as if they were determined to tear away the whole promontory, for I perceived from certain coast indications that the spot on which we had been cast away was of that character, viz. one of the many spikes which Ireland projects into the Atlantic. I leaned out as far as I could, but I was not able to see these rollers strike the cliff; I only knew that they had struck by the welter and rush seaward of the refluent wave. It was therefore evident that the base of the cliff had been worn away by the grinding and corroding action of the seas hurling against it for untold centuries vast masses of stone and gravel, and that the craggy ledge upon which the Old Rake and myself were now supported leaned over the base of the cliff.

Presently, looking around and upwards, I found that the cliff was not scaleable from the platform. There was the cave and the ledge of jagged rocks, but above the cave's mouth there was nothing but sheer cliff. There was

no spot upon this ledge from which even the most sure-footed climber could escape to the top. The cliff everywhere was not so much sheer as inclining forward and outwards. In fact, the whole face of the cliff from base to summit seemed to incline somewhat forward; wherever it was not vertical or nearly so it seemed to hang beetling.

At the same time, I did not permit myself to entertain a doubt that the cliff was somewhere ascendable. My exploration did not last long, for I resolved like that old Spartan harmost to postpone serious matters till after breakfast. I myself felt all the vulture in my jaws, and my thoughts were eagerly intent on food. I made up my mind not to awake Ned till I should have a surprise ready for him in the shape of a good breakfast.

Whatever else I may have felt in doubt about, I knew that the boat carried food enough to supply us with breakfast. So firmly did she seem jammed that I did not hesitate to get out as far as the locker in the stern, although my weight added to its own seemed to render an

upset possible. I did not wish to get to the locker on this occasion, but only to Ned's hamper, which was close beside it and which contained the remains of our yesterday's banqueting. I was glad to find that the jar of fresh water was quite full. After drinking tea in the Cave of the Mermaids, Ned had taken the precaution of refilling the jar from a little stream which flowed there down the sides of the cavern. I remember his asking me whether I had an envelope in my pocket, and when I gave it to him he folded it into the form of a little aqueduct, and setting it against the side of the rock where the water was flowing, had so refilled our jar. It was full to the brim. I took a moderate drink from that jar. The bread in the hamper was soaked with salt water. I noticed that the faithful old pot, but for which we would have been swamped yesterday, stood upright on its three legs and was nearly full of salt water. I closed the hamper and carried it, just as it was, out of the boat into the cave. Ned lay still outstretched in happy slumbers. Then I returned to the boat, and came back with the

pot and loose thwart, which I had been using as a rudder. With this as fuel, I now began to make a fire. I need hardly say that I had a clasp-knife in my pocket. When was a country-bred boy ever caught without his clasp-knife? Mine was an excellent one, given to me by a school comrade. I had matches, but resolved to husband them, and kindle my fire at the cost of a single match. So I set to work with caution. I took the thwart and cut slivers from it to make the beginning of a fire, first laying aside the outer ones, which were too wet. Then I made a second heap of little splints like matches, a third heap of splints a little larger, and finally one of splints as big as my little finger. From the interior I brought a dry flat stone to serve as hearth, and placed it near that patch of light, so that I should have light enough to work by. Should Ned awake now he would see my fire from the place where he lay. My idea was to give him a pleasant surprise on his awakening. To fire-lighters I would give this hint, that everything depends upon small beginnings and gradation of fuel. A man can

kindle a fire even from wet timber if he make his initial heap with sufficiently fine shavings. The wetter the timber, the finer must be his shavings, and when the timber is quite wet these cannot be too fine or thread-like. This hint may be found useful at times when lucifers are scarce.

CHAPTER XVII.

BREAKFAST.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

I NOW struck a match and kindled the little crib of fine shavings, after which I kept adding fuel gradually and carefully from the first heap and the second, and so on as the fire blazed up and grew stronger, finally laying on the big splints into which I had divided the thwart. Soon I had a good and brightly blazing fire.

The reader may be surprised to learn that I had matches with me which would light, after such a drenching as we had sustained during the night. Ned's box of matches, which was in the hamper, was quite useless. He had forgotten to put on or had lost the cover of the box, and the brimstone had melted away. But before leaving the Rectory I, knowing from some

experience what it was to be without matches upon an outing such as ours, and fearing Ned might forget them, had thrust into my pocket a full box taken from my mother's pantry. In those days lucifer matches were not stored horizontally in such loose boxes as Paterson and Company now issue by the million over the world, and which if once immersed in water destroy the matches. The match-box of those days was a sort of timber canister, with a tight-fitting lid, and the bottom was glued to the sides. Such a match-box was water-tight.

My box was full, and it was water-tight. Yet there were only three good matches in the box. In boxes of the kind which I have described, the matches stood on end, packed closely together with their heads up. Oftentimes the attempt to extract one by the nails ended in igniting the whole. The box which I possessed had become almost useless owing to such clumsiness. I fancy one of my little brothers had been nibbling at it. All the visible heads had been burned away, but on pouring them out I found three good ones

which had escaped the conflagration by their shortness. Their heads were below the line of fire. So it was my poverty that caused me to be so careful in the preparation of my kindling matter on this occasion.

I now planted my tripod of salt water on the fire. Those primitive rural three-legged pots are sometimes very useful. They stand up steadily and intelligently on their three iron legs, well removed from the turf or timber, needing no elaborate arrangement of stones for their support. I now poured some potatoes into my tripod, and returning to the boat took thence from under the stern flooring two good-sized creehogues, and returning, plunged them into the pot amongst the potatoes, and then sat at my ease patiently feeding the fire. As soon as the fish and potatoes were nearly cooked I awoke Ned. Ned, like myself, had much difficulty in realizing the extraordinary situation in which he now found himself. He looked around him, dazed and wondering. "Nice long day on the water, Ned," I cried. "Hurricane, thunder,

lifted up here, high and dry, on the cliff-side." Intelligence slowly dawned upon Ned's sleepy visage. Then I directed his attention to the spectacle which I had provided for him. It was indeed a most beautiful, pleasing, and homely sight. There, a little in front, in the midst of the dark cavern, was my cheerful stick fire blazing and crackling, and above the same, standing on its three sturdy legs, was my tripod, its "belly," as Homer would say, now well warmed with the flames, as was evident by the bubbling of the water, which continually sent its froth over the lip to trickle hissing into the fire beneath. In the cheerful light the jagged sides and roof of the cave were faintly illuminated. Then, beyond this work of domestic art naturally so welcome to a very tired and hungry boy, was the glorious sunshine streaming like floods of gold into the mouth of the cave. For Ned this was a most pleasant awakening. With sleepy black eyes glowing with pleasure, and a broad fixed smile, which looked as if it would stay there for ever, he continued to contemplate

my work of art, and to feed his imagination with all that it meant. Ned, in spite of these evidences of sound health and cheerfulness, was physically very weak and slack, content to take my description of the situation, and to defer explorations on his own account till he should have breakfasted.

Ned dearly loved an adventure, especially anything of the Crusoe kind, and there was certainly enough in our present position to satisfy a *gourmand* in that way. His black eyes now positively danced for joy as he more fully realised the terrible past and the apparently delightful and romantic present. My own reflections were by no means so gay, but I said nothing yet to damp Ned's ardour. So we chattered away gaily, true to the old West Irish saying that—

> "The finest divarsion that's under the sun,
> Is to sit by the fire till the praties are done."

Though neither of us said so, I am sure we were both sufficiently conscious that our extraordinary escape from a miserable death was

due to Divine Providence, and not to our own exertions, or to what is called luck. I think we must have been pious boys in our way. Certainly we both kneeled and prayed every morning and evening with great regularity on the hard floor of the cave, and tried to keep the Sabbath holy as long as we were on the cliff.

This morning, in spite of our wet clothes, we were as happy as possible. Probably a night in wet clothes would now be my death, but we were a healthy and hardy pair of lads in those days, and in winter were wet almost as often as dry, and indeed, like that cheerful wight in the song, never at any time cared a button for the weather.

When the potatoes and fish were fully done, I removed the tripod from the fire, put down the kettle, half filling it with fresh water from the jar, and made tea. We still had a little milk in a bottle. In short, we made an excellent breakfast of floury potatoes, boiled fish, and piping hot tea, and, if cheerful before, became quite hilarious now and ready for anything,

"o'er all the ills of earth victorious," like that Scotch gentleman—I forget his name—who sat up so late hobnobbing with the landlady, and forgetful of the homeward road.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WATER FAMINE.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

Not to damp Ned's ardour, and not to spoil for us both this jolly breakfast, which was a sort of matutinal carouse, and which after our hardships we so well deserved, I had been silent so far as to the ominous features of the situation, viz. the difficulty of escaping out of this inhospitable spot, and the apparent absence of any fresh water supply.

Breakfast over, Ned, whom the tea had not altogether satisfied, was about to uncork the water-jar, and take a big drink, but I restrained him.

"No, Ned," I said. "This water must be measured out at long intervals. It is the only drinking water here, and we must economise it

to the utmost. It may not rain for days, and if it does not, and our jar is empty, we shall be in a bad way."

"But we are not going to stay here," he replied. "Of course we shall move inland, and make our way home." In reply I explained to him the nature of the situation so far as I understood it from my first cursory survey. Ned refused to accept my report. He was an excellent climber, and thought that there was no cliff which he could not scale. He now darted forth with the object of making an exploration on his own account. As I followed Ned, I struck against something with my foot which gave a dull sound. It was timber; I felt for the obstruction, and found that it was a great beam, and that it lay horizontally along the right side of the cavern as we went out. I was glad of this, for though water was the commodity in which we were shortest, I perceived that if we were compelled to remain here for any length of time, the question of fuel would become important too. I found Ned on the platform with his head thrown backwards,

looking up. Then he went to the southern extremity of the same, examining and considering. There, too, the cliff rose sheer or beetling above, while hundreds of feet below the breakers were still rolling white against the base. He went to the northern extremity, only to find there, too, what I had promised him that he would find—the boiling seas below and the beetling cliff above.

"I fear it is as you say, Jack," he said at last. "It is impossible to ascend the cliff. We must let ourselves down, and from the timbers of the Old Rake manufacture a raft, and so get to some strand or landing-place as soon as the water is quiet. We can divide up the rope and twist from it a cord strong enough and long enough to enable us to get to the water."

"But there is no rope. I cut it away because it hampered me in the steering."

Neither Ned's ingenuity nor mine could discern a mode of possible escape as things stood at present. Evidently we could not scale the cliff, and just as evidently we had not the ways and means of letting ourselves down into the

sea. Of course it entered the minds of both of us that, as a last resort, we might plunge from the platform, but the distance was too great. The concussion with the water after falling from such a height would kill us were we to make the attempt.

For the present, then, nothing remained but to take stock of our various properties, and convey everything which might be useful from the boat to the cave. We set about this at once, and a pleasant task it was, for now every article in the boat promised to be of some use, and became most valuable in our eyes. One can imagine with what joy, for example, I brought away the gun, rusty and speckled as it now was. The powder-horn was all this time in my coat pocket, and the shot-pouch slung over my shoulder.

"I don't see my cornopean anywhere," cried Ned mournfully, after searching the boat from end to end.

"Well, Ned," I replied, "we can neither eat it nor drink it."

Ned's grief was great for the loss of his cor-

nopean. I was sorry too. I knew his brazen strains would be a solace to us both in our rock hermitage. But I had more serious matters to think of. The water question, though I did not again mention it, continued at intervals to thrust itself alarmingly into my ruminations. The gale had quite fallen, though the breakers still kept flinging themselves in a sleepy manner against the foot of the cliff. There was every indication that fine weather would succeed that late terrible convulsion of the elements. This was no comfort at all. I longed for black clouds and storm symptoms, because I longed for rain in order that we might supply ourselves with water; consequently I eyed at intervals the unwelcome blueness of the sky with a dread that momentarily increased. I reflected, with a queer cold sensation in the region of the heart, that in three days, if rain did not fall, poor Ned, now troubled so sorely about the loss of his brazen instrument of music, would have a much better reason for complaining. As I was the elder and the leader, Ned, I suppose, felt that this and all other grave responsibilities

rested on my shoulders. He was accustomed to leave everything serious to me. So now, though he ought to have known that lack of water was likely to dry our lives up in a few days, he kept harping on the loss of his beautiful cornopean.

In the meantime we were conveying the contents of the boat into the cave, or spreading them on the platform to dry. The fact that we had brought our topcoats with us was one small consolation. They were of pilot-cloth, very thick, strong material, and reached nearly to our heels. My bones were so sore from lodging last night on the hard ground, and I was also so cold when I woke, that I felt glad to think that in future I would lie well wrapped. We had a good supply of fish, also crabs and lobsters. The fish we cleaned, split, and spread out upon the platform to dry. The crabs and lobsters could not be treated in this manner. The sun, which would dry up and cure the fish, would spoil the crustaceans. I put the crabs into the pot, which was half filled with salt water, and stowed the lobsters away in the cool

interior of the cave. I had a plan in my mind for keeping them alive, but could not execute it just yet, owing to the fierce tumult of the waters which still raged white beneath us. In fact, I purposed tying them securely together, and letting them down by means of our fishing-lines. In the matter of line we were well off. We had two big pollock-rods, with all their fine strong line upon their respective reels. We had also the ordinary fisherman's so-called reels, mere bars of timber jointed in the form of a square, round which the line was wound. The leads attached to these had prevented them from floating away when the boat was full of agitated water during that final race to the rock, when Ned was holding on like grim death to the blanket, and I steering with the thwart. Our top-coats were saved on this occasion by heavy articles in the pockets. There ought to have been some sods of turf, but they had all swum away save one. We both laughed as we removed this solitary sod, and set it affectionately on the rock to dry. As we always burned turf at home, there was something pleasantly

suggestive in this bit of brown peat. We both now agreed not to burn it, but to keep it for luck. I have still a singular love for turf, the pungent odour of which affects me like the singing of songs familiar to me in childhood.

I expected to get a great deal from the locker, and was not disappointed. Into this we were always storing away things, either for use, or because we had nowhere else to put them. So it was partly a locker in the proper sense of the word, and partly a lumber-room. Here were bits of rope and cord, a bait box, a kitchen fork, a couple of knives worn to the stump or near it, and some empty porter bottles with " Hafferty, Grocer, Main Street, Ballymohur," pasted on the outside. Some time before this we had taken four men to row us to a singular rock, a great place for pollock of such a size as I never caught elsewhere, and had brought the porter for the refreshment of the men. There was also a small flask of whiskey, forgotten by our friend Mr. Watkins, and, in fact, a great variety of odds and ends, and one big overall, oil-cloth.

While I was removing the miscellanea of the locker, I caused Ned to sit in the stern of the boat, for though she seemed pretty surely jammed in that fork of rock, nearly half her length projected over the abyss. Having removed everything, so as not to leave a scrap behind, I, with great difficulty, untied the knot by which the anchor rope was fastened to the iron bolt in the bow. This rope I had indeed severed close to the bolt, but in the knot and the hither end of the rope I saved about two yards of the rope, therefore a good many pounds of hemp.

By the time all this was done the sun had come out blazing hot, owing to the reflections from the rock, and neither of us had caps. We at last retreated into the coolness of the cave, and began to count up and sort our treasures.

The enumeration, sorting, and laying aside of all these treasures, and the conversation concerning the uses to which they might be put, afforded Ned great pleasure, but me much less, so perplexed was I by that haunting thought concerning the water. I examined the condi-

tion of the jar by plunging my knife down the neck, and concluded that it was about three-parts full. Its holding capacity was four quarts exactly. I knew that, because I had often brought out the same vessel charged with porter for the men who rowed. So, allowing for evaporation and loss, there were in the jar about forty wine-glasses of water. I had no notion how much water per diem we would require, so determined to experimentalise, and dole the water out glass by glass. As to timber we were well off. We had the Old Rake to fall back upon as soon as that lucky log should be exhausted, and I calculated it would supply us with fuel for a long time.

With the remains of our thwart, and the embers hidden in the ashes, we now kindled a second fire, not this time amongst the stones and gravel at the extremity of the cave, but upon the hard floor, and near the entrance, where we had a view of the glittering and scintillating sea. There was not a sail in sight, though far away on the edge of the horizon I thought I saw the smoke trail of a steamer. In fact, I

was on the look-out for passing ships. Yet there was really nothing to be hoped for in that quarter. If a ship passed near enough for the captain to see us with his perspective it could mean nothing to us. What significance would he attach to the sight of two boys on the side of a cliff? He might turn to the mate, and remark jocosely, "Half-way down hang two who gather samphire; fearful trade." If we fired our gun, he would say, "Ah! shooting sea-gulls, a cruel amusement." The fact that we were here against our will close prisoners, and could neither get up nor down, would never dawn upon his mind. Moreover, as I knew from experience, ships seldom or never did pass near this iron shore, there being no inducement or necessity. There was no coast trade. No; nothing was to be hoped for in this direction. On the other hand, the promontory might be visited by fishing-boats, but I did not expect to see any for a few days, not till the swell and heave of the sea had somewhat subsided.

CHAPTER XIX.

LONG LEGS AND SHARP EYES.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

WHILE the kettle which contained our dinner was boiling, Ned went out on the platform to sun himself, or I know not what. Presently I heard him shouting, "Come out, Jack. Here is something curious."

I found him on the platform looking upwards, and presently saw that from a hole a few yards above the entrance to the cave the smoke of our fire was quietly exhaling, ascending gently along the cliff-side in the now almost windless air, as if from the chimney of some homely and prosaic dwelling of man. I then returned, jointed one of the fishing-rods, felt about in the roof of the cave for the fissure, found it with some difficulty, and then heard

Ned cry out that he could just see the point of my rod where the smoke was issuing on the outside. In a situation like ours any little excitement, novelty, or discovery was welcome. After exchanging sundry remarks on this unimportant new feature of our residence, we returned to our kettle and fire. If we could ever manage to fix a door to the cave's mouth, this natural flue would be very useful in giving vent to our smoke. Indeed, at one point the cave's mouth suggested the possibility of applying a door, for, though wide at the opening directly above the platform, it narrowed considerably so that the actual entrance into the interior of the cave was not much bigger than an ordinary doorway. That smoke-vent, however, was infinitely more significant than we imagined.

Our potatoes and fish, having been boiled in salt water, made us thirstier than we otherwise might have been. As we had drunk very little that morning, I now began to experience, in fact, some slight foretaste of the horrors of thirst. This intolerable craving for water induced me to alter my former resolution. I had

determined to dole out our little supply in such a manner as would sustain life and no more. Now I reasoned that if no relief from the clouds should come to us, we would in that case die most miserably and by inches, and every moment that passed convinced me that we would now have no rain for many days. It would be better, I said, to live free from that agony while we could, than sit staring at each other with parched throats, and no doubt end by throwing all prudence to the winds, and suddenly, under pressure of the fierce temptation, dividing and drinking up all the water at once. I knew the weather-signs of the west coast as well as any one, and knew that the weather was set fair. So having concluded our meal, I served out four wine-glasses apiece, which we drank slowly. This was enough to abolish the agony, though it still left us thirsty enough.

Though I could perceive that we were doomed, nor could imagine the possibility of relief, I took steps to preserve that more perishable portion of our food-supply, which consisted of lobsters. These, though at the expense of a

very sharp pinch which drew blood, I fastened securely together, and in such a way that they could not cut the line to which they were attached, and let them down over the bow of the boat. Ned watched them in their descent till they just touched the surface of the water. Ned, I may mention, was singularly long-sighted. Then I made fast the line which bound them, and left them there to be as happy as they could under the circumstances. According as the tide was coming in or going out, I used to lengthen or shorten the line, so that they should neither hang baking in mid-air, nor, on the other hand, get tossed in upon breakers against the rocks when the line might be frayed and snap. I succeeded in keeping them alive, though in diminishing numbers, for a good many days by this device. Of course I hauled them up at night when, being asleep, we could not attend to their tidal requirements.

Supper exhausted our little supply of potatoes; we again drank on the same principle as that which guided me at dinner-time. Ned went to the cave entrance, and sat down

there doing something. I was the stronger, perhaps the bolder, but Ned was far more ingenious, very inventive in mind, and very skilful with his fingers. What he was doing now I did not know nor care, but was amazed to see him so cheery and light-hearted under the tragic circumstances in which our lot was cast, with the very cruellest of deaths approaching us as steadily as time. I knew I would live longer than Ned, being the senior and stronger. I was determined not to allow him to become a raving maniac before my eyes, and was fully resolved, if the worst came to the worst, to fling him from the platform into the sea, and then follow him. I said it was best that we should die as rational beings, and with a prayer to the Almighty on our lips, rather than as madmen, and possibly pouring forth blasphemies. While I lay outstretched in the darkness of the cave, I could hear Ned at the entrance whistling as gaily as a shoemaker, and occasionally breaking out into song, but speedily stopping again, for his voice was in the cracked stage. Ned's hilarity, which at first I thought pathetic and

felt inclined to weep over, eventually jarred upon me. He knew as well as I did that our scanty supply of water was running out, and that the beginning of death by thirst was within twenty-four hours of us, yet here he was whistling like a blackbird in the dewy morning, and trying to sing with his odious cracked voice. At last I shouted to him to stop. I wanted no more of that infernal row. There was silence now, but I thought I heard a low laugh. Then Ned entered the cave, which was beginning to grow dark, the sun having just set. He approached me with the water-jar. "Drink, Jack," he said.

"No," I replied angrily.

"May I have one myself?" he persisted.

"No, not a drop," I said.

"Then let us make tea."

"You are an idiot," I replied. "Don't you know that half the water will evaporate in the boiling?"

"Ah!" he answered. "Very true. Evaporate in the boiling! O Wisdom, how inestimable art thou!"

Had I not been so angry, I might have guessed something from his curious behaviour. I thought it was all no more than a Frenchman's impious merriment in the presence of death. But he had not done yet.

He uncorked the jar, and canted it half over. "Shall I spill it all out?" he said. "It is not quite fresh."

"If you spill a single drop," I said, "I shall break every bone in your body."

He was some distance from me when he said and did this; otherwise, I would have sprung on him and taken the jar forcibly out of his hands.

Then he laughed, a good-humoured and affectionate laugh, and added impertinently—

"We all know, Jack, that you are as bold as a lion, but never suspected also that you have the brains of a goose. Come with me."

Half guessing the truth, and with a beating heart, I followed him. He picked up a fishing-rod, to the end of which he had made fast one of the tin porringers, and led me to the southern extremity of the platform. "Now plant your-

self firmly here," he said, " with your right foot on that projecting rock, and mind don't fall"—this with a fatherly air of superiority. " Now take the rod in your right hand and get the porringer round that angle of rock where you see the white streak. That will do. Now, whatever you do, don't look behind, and don't be surprised at anything that may happen. Hold the rod strongly."

I did as I was desired. Presently I heard Ned's voice from somewhere behind me sing out, " Bring your elbow further out, and the porringer further in."

" Will that do?"

" No. In further."

" Then I must get my right foot on the very crest of the rock."

" Well, do, but take care of yourself. Yes, that will do. Now lower it. Quite right. Now an inch further forward. So. Correct in every particular."

As he said this I heard the porringer, for I could not see it, strike the rock somewhere at the other side of that projection, and presently

was aware that a weight was gathering at the point of the rod.

"That will do," cried Ned cheerily. "Now get back with caution."

I retreated to the platform, my rod bending from the weight, and to my horror saw Ned stretched out like a straight stick in front of the bow of the boat, and of course right above the abyss. Indeed, his long body made for the boat a sort of thick bowsprit. He had done this by catching his toes in a bar that crossed the locker. An old rusty ring ran loose upon this bar, a relic of the time when the Old Rake was a real sailing-boat, and with a fore and aft rig. The sheet of the fore-sail was made fast to this sliding ring, a convenient arrangement which saved trouble in tacking. Ned now drew himself up, sat upon the locker, and scrambled towards me through the boat. He had remained in that horizontal position longer than was necessary, partly to show me by ocular demonstration how the water had been discovered, and partly, I suspect, just to show off.

Alarmed as I was at seeing him in such a

situation, I had presence of mind sufficient to carry the precious tin of water steadily.

"You must not go there again, Ned," I observed, with some severity of countenance.

"It won't be necessary," he replied. "I saw exactly the point at which your rod went round the corner. It is about an inch from the lower end of the streak."

We divided the contents of that porringer, and then of a second, and also of a third. When I had had my share of the third, but not till then, I said :—

"It strikes me, Ned, that the water is rather brackish."

"What else can it be," he said, "when the whole headland has been so lately drenched in salt water? Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Now for tea, 'af it be plazing to yer honour.'"

"Quite pleasing, Ned. You deserve it. We ought to set up your statue here on the platform, 'fair for all folks to see.'"

We filled our kettle, and as we sat beside it

joyfully waiting for the boil, I asked Ned how he came to discover the fountain.

"Well," said he, "it happened in this way. When I discovered that chimney flue, the thought entered my mind that somebody had been here before. Of course that is nonsense, but still I kept imagining how such a person might have lived; and knowing that he could not do without water, and as we had searched everywhere else, I thought I would just get my toes into the foresail of the Old Rake, and take a squint round the corner. And there I saw that darling little stream of water issuing from a cleft, and running down the cliff-side."

Though the milk was now a little sour, and though the bread was very salt, we made a good supper, and sat by the fire chatting for a long time, and discussing possibilities and probabilities.

"We have lots of prog," said Ned, "and lots of water. If I only had my cornopean I think I should be perfectly happy."

"Well, Ned," I said, "good fortune has as much right to come double as bad fortune.

Perhaps it has not gone, after all. Perhaps it is between the broken timbers and the rock."

"I tried there," said Ned sadly.

"Well, let us try again. Better let us cut away the timber near any likely fracture."

I seized the hatchet, and went out. The moon was shining on the water. It was the harvest moon, and, as yet, quite invisible from our platform, owing to the height of the cliff. I went into the boat, hatchet in hand, and choosing one likely fracture, cut the boards on one side of it. Under the first plank which I was able to tear out, I saw a yellow gleam in the moonlight, and knew that it came from the lost instrument. Ned's joy was indescribable. That night we had tootlings and sweet pipings, even more than enough, for I got tired of being awake before Ned got tired of his cornet-à-pistons. And yed Ned's sweet old airs, and the fantasias and fandangos, his own inventions, with which he adorned their naked simplicity, sounded very sweet in the still moonlit night, and awakened the most agreeable echoes in the surrounding rocks and hollows. We sat to-

gether on the ledge, upon a sofa or lounge of stones and gravel made by Ned, cushioned luxuriously with the sail of the boat and our pilot-cloth topcoats, like a pair of kings, and happier, I fancy, that night than any kings have ever been.

CHAPTER XX.

NED'S ÆSTHETICS.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

NEXT morning, after we had breakfasted, Ned began to build a sort of arbour on the platform on the right-hand side of the cave's mouth. Whenever I use the expressions right or left, remember that I suppose myself to be facing the sea. At this point was a certain natural archway, which Ned proceeded to enlarge with mallet and chisel, and also to level the ragged floor of the platform under and in front of the arch. From breakfast to dinner he continued to hack away industriously, and sweep the debris into the deep. His mallet was one of the boat's ribs neatly prepared. In this labour he seemed to be as happy as possible. From time to time he would stand up, and, with sparkling eyes, contemplate the beautiful results of his labour.

I once met in some book a sentiment which pleased me so much that I committed it to memory: "Man is here to make rule out of the ruleless. By his living energy, he will cause the absurd itself to become less absurd." Ned, I think, was formed to make ugly things beautiful, and disorderly things orderly. Within doors, indeed, he was anything but orderly, and never fulfilled the old rule, "A place for everything, and everything in its place," with the exception of his clothes, for about his clothes he was very natty and careful. But out of doors he was a wonder for re-ordering, arranging, improving, and beautifying. I wonder he did not become a landscape gardener. If the stepping-stones across a stream were crooked, he put them straight. If the branch of a willow touched the water, and collected hay, leaves, and ugly froth, he was not happy till he had cut it away.

At this time he was mad about arbours. At home he had one wherever there was a pretty view, or where the situation lent itself to the construction of such a building, and they were all pretty ones. "One of Ned's arbours" was

quite a phrase at home. We came upon them in very unsuspected and unlikely places. Now, as if he had washed his hands quite clean of all responsibility with regard to the question of the ways and means of living, he devoted himself entirely to the making of an arbour. Ned had made many arbours, but never one in such a lofty, commanding, picturesque, and altogether sublime and august situation as the present, and he became so absorbed in this affair that for a good many days he would not bestow a serious thought upon anything else. Sometimes, when I had been discoursing for a quarter of an hour together upon my devices and expedients for the collection of food, I caught Ned's eyes glowing and dancing with pleasure, not at all in admiration of my ingenuity and success, but at the vision of his own completed arbour and its exceeding loveliness and picturesqueness, and at the thought of himself, I suppose, tootling and trumpeting in the midst of his lovely stone bower. And truly, when the visible fact came to correspond with his beautiful imaginings, I could hardly tell whether the result was ludicrous or lovely. How he got the seat fixed

in the solid rock I never found out—probably I had no curiosity that way; but the seat of his arbour was as firm as the rock itself. There were two seats—one for himself, and one for me. Between us was an elbow-rest of stone, cut and carved from the living rock, and very much resembling the elbow-rests in first-class railway carriages, while each of us had a second rest for the other elbow, and a sort of bay in the rock behind, which fitted perfectly our respective figures, so that we could lean back comfortably. The unfortunate chisel, I must say, suffered for all this. It was worn half-way to the stump, what with the work it did, and Ned's frequent grindings to keep it sharp. He afterwards designed other stone-cutting achievements, but here I made a stand in defence of the chisel. Ned at last succumbed, when he found that he could not play upon me, for no one had a clearer appreciation of the final factor, which, in the present case, was brute force, and the use of a pair of fists bigger than his own.

In front of the arbour he planted a garden. Here, with an eye to the picturesque, he graciously permitted a little wild nature in the

shape of unadulterated native rock, spiked and jagged, to remain, concealed for the most part, however, with greenery and flowers. The flowers consisted mainly of sea-pinks, but there were other varieties too which I am not clever enough to name. In fact, the whole cliff-side here was denuded to furnish Ned's flower-garden. With a hook fastened to the end of a rod, he plucked down flowers and plants from such high places as he was unable to reach, and for that purpose even fastened the two rods together so as to extend his zone of devastation. For my part, I thought it prettier to see the flowers and green things growing in the places they liked best. But there is no accounting for tastes.

Perhaps Ned's cleverest invention, considering the poverty of his materials, was a four-sided glass lamp or lanthorn, the making of which I may have to describe later on, for it served other than æsthetic purposes. This lamp he hung from the crown of the arbour. One might guess a long time without discovering how he made a fixture there from which the lamp would hang. When all was finished, and

Ned sat here in the solemn evenings trumpeting and tootling, he looked the picture of great but somewhat ludicrous happiness—happiness and self-approbation. There was something surely almost tragi-comical in the spectacle of all this cultivation of the Muses and Graces in a spot where it seemed so likely that in the end we would perish miserably.

During these days I wrote, with blood taken from my arm, a short letter, put it into one of the spare bottles, and committed it to the deep. I attached little importance to this missive, for I believed the bottle would be broken against the cliffs. Four letters in all of this description I wrote, and entrusted to the keeping of our four empty porter bottles. One of these bottles, as the reader is aware, fell into the hands of Frank Furbisher, who edits this narrative, and thinks, I hope with reason, that he will be able to make a readable story out of this curious and unusual adventure. The Ballymohur bottles by the way were made of delf not of glass, but we called them bottles. The labels of those bottles were of course washed away by the action of the water.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW ABOUT FOOD?

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

To return to myself. As day followed day, and beyond a rare ship sailing in the blue distance, nothing in the shape of a marine craft came near our rocky perch, I perceived that, with the winter now fast striding down upon us, it was necessary to lay in a winter's supply of food. The question was, How? The most obvious method was of course by catching and curing fish. We were lucky in one respect, for, owing to the shelving of the cliff beneath us, worn away as it was by the attrition of the waves, our little platform impended over the sea. Just beneath the platform, indeed, there was unfortunately a reef, which even at high tide was not much more than covered. The existence of this

reef compelled me quite to put out of my mind the thought of plunging from the platform and swimming round to some landing-place, or paddling thither with the assistance of boards cut from the boat, and flung down prior to the plunge. Save as a last resort, I had never intended to adopt this desperate expedient, and even as a desperate expedient it was out of the question. But I found that by going to the extreme southern or left-hand limit of the platform, therefore at the end opposite to Ned's arbour, I could drop a line from my rod into deep water just beyond the reef to which I have referred. I knew that the kind of fish likely to be taken here were conor, a bony and watery fish, but often in wild places attaining to a great size; and these fish have a peculiar love for the insides of crabs and lobsters. They like lug-worms best of all, but I had no lug-worms, and I had a good supply of crabs and lobsters.

I commenced now, on the morning after we had discovered the fountain of water, to fish with an earnestness of which I had never been conscious before, for now I fished not for sport,

but in order that we might live and not die. It was an awful moment when I cast my first line. Fish are strangely capricious. They will haunt certain rocks, and other rocks that seem to supply quite as good feeding-grounds they will altogether avoid. I could not tell beforehand whether this was or was not a good fishing ground. The probability was that it was not, for it is only here and there one strikes a good rock. The place, however, looked good, for the rock beside which I cast, or rather let my bait fall, seemed, as well as I could see, to run sheer down into deep water, which is a good sign. I worked with the butt and second joint of the rod, for I knew the top would snap in the attempt to raise any fish that was not diminutive. When I was aware that the lead had struck bottom I reeled in the line a little, so that the bait might float free of weeds and obstructions. That was a moment! My whole soul seemed lodged in the tips of my fingers as I waited for the tug. On the question of tug or no tug revolved the other question, whether we were to live or die. And yet at this moment,

when the question of life or death was, as it were, trembling in the balance, I could hear the noise of Ned's chisel and mallet as he carved æsthetic grottoes, and his hilarious hummings and whistlings. If this ground failed to yield, we might as well die at once. So at least I thought, for on the north side, Ned's side, a line let down anywhere would strike shallow water owing to that reef, and there was no chance there of a fish. Nor was it possible, for I had tried, to swing the lead and baited hook past the reef at that point into unobstructed water. Our lives depended upon the producing powers of this little patch of fishing-ground on the south side.

As the minutes passed, without any palpable indication that my bait had attracted the attention of a fish, I first began to tremble violently, and then to feel sick—I mean sick literally. Then I reeled up for the present. I think an hour passed before I felt myself firm enough to renew the attempt. After a few minutes I reeled up again. As I did so, I thought the weight was greater than could be accounted for by the sinker, and presently found

that I had taken a small conor about a span long. I perceived now, that, owing to the great length of the line, which swayed to the slightest breath of wind, and also to the unpliable nature of my rod, it needed on my part the very closest attention to distinguish a tug administered so far below, and that I should cultivate to the utmost my sensitiveness of touch. My next take was a much larger fish, whose twitch at the hook I barely distinguished. It was probably a conor. Him I did not land; he fell off before I had reeled him half-way up. In my next cast I was more successful. I safely landed a fine full-grown conor, who had been hooked in the strong and bony upper jaw. In fact, nearly every good-sized fish which I succeeded in landing was so hooked. It was only the little ones that I could bring up when hooked in the weak parts of the mouth.

But I did not mind any such misadventures, or the great waste of time consequent on reeling in such a quantity of line. One grand aspect of the problem had been successfully solved. It was now plain that we had at our own very

doors an excellent food-supply—one, too, which would not fail as long as fine weather lasted. I determined to utilize to the utmost this fine weather which now prevailed, knowing well that during the winter which was approaching, the rough water below would effectually protect the fish against my machinations. This first day, besides many conors, I also caught three pollock, a codling, and a good-sized eel. Also I took one crab, which clung to and grappled with the bait with invincible resolution, till he was safely landed on the platform, and laid there a prisoner on his back. I must have unconsciously tilted him over afterwards with my heels, for when I was collecting my prey in the evening, he was nowhere to be found. Whether he succeeded in walking down the cliff, or took a header into the sea, I don't know. Good luck attend you, my plucky friend, wherever you may be to-day!

While I was so engaged, Ned would now and again obtrude his happy face and cheerful personality between me and my labours, in a pleasantly patronising manner, which I did not

relish, saying various things in English, which might be translated into Latin as "*Macte novâ virtute, puer!*" *i.e.* "Go on, lad; prosper in your young valour."

From time to time I cleaned and split the fish, and spread them out to dry. In the afternoon we looked quite like a fish-curing establishment.

For some days now we went on in this fashion, I fishing industriously and curing my fish, and Ned just as industriously, but with much more *aplomb* and personal satisfaction, splintering the rocks during daylight, and in the dewy eve pouring forth his sentimental soul through his three-keyed cornet-à-pistons. During those days also he made another structure, this one hanging sheer over the sea. The finish and elegance of Ned's workmanship were apparent here too, and almost made me tumble off the ledge for laughing. In fact, he attained the maximum of ease and comfort, combined, as I have said, with elegance, and also a certain withdrawness agreeably reminiscent of civilised life.

I was rather triumphant over my success

in curing fish, when I made an unwelcome discovery. In short, it was suddenly one day brought home to me that my fish had not been cured at all, and I had to fling away the whole of my little pile. Our neighbours at home were always curing fish by spreading them on rocks in the sun. I thought that nothing else was necessary than to clean, split, and spread them out. That evening Ned and I had a talk over the matter, and between us, comparing reminiscences, discovered that the fish should be first salted before being spread out to bake in the sun.

We recalled the fact that dried haak and ling, which we often ate at home, shredded and mingled in crusty potato pies, were not only dry, but salt, and remembered, what I should have remembered before, that fish, though they live in the salt water, even when eaten fresh, need salt for a relish, so little salt have they in their composition, which is a curious fact. There was a little bag of salt amongst the treasures found in the locker, but by no means enough to salt our winter supply of fish. I suggested boiling down

water for the sake of the salty residuum. Ned said, sensibly enough, that in order to get a sufficient supply of salt by that method we would probably have to burn away all our timber. Eventually we hit on a plan which answered the purpose, yet spared our timber. In the big pot we boiled down water till it became brine—in fact, a strong pickle—the steam carrying away the fresh elements of the water. But to supply ourselves with a sufficiency of strong brine, we had to boil away a great deal of salt water. Still the big beam held out bravely. This beam we split into fuel by driving into it at different points the big iron bolts which we extracted from the timbers of the old boat, hammering them in with the head of the hatchet. Indeed, so great was the beam that by no other method had we any chance of dividing it up. This beam, which was of such priceless value to us, was twenty-two feet and a half long by a little over three feet broad. It was square. I did not know then, nor do I now, from what sort of tree it was made. It was not deal, ash, oak, or mahogany. It was reddish in

hue, of a close grain, and burned slowly, almost like coke. We had the greatest difficulty in splitting it.

As to salt water, we simply drew it up from the sea in one of our porringers let down from the end of a rod. I reeled up the full porringer as I would a fish, using of course a rod with only two joints. To the porringer we attached a little hanger made of fishing-line drawn through two punctures one on each side of the lip. It would have been almost useless to let it down by its own handle. In that case it would hardly have drawn an egg-cupful of water.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WATER FAMINE AGAIN.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

One morning, about a fortnight after we had been tossed upon the ledge, there arose a new terror, or rather an old one in a new form. For two or three days previously I was aware that my water-can did not fill as rapidly as it used to. I did not mind this much at first. The most perennial spring will not run so copiously in drought as after wet weather. But on this particular morning the fear was borne in upon my mind almost to the degree of conviction that the spring was not at all perennial, but one which ran only after rain. In fact, we were threatened with another water-famine.

I resolved, therefore, without a moment's loss of time, to lay in a water supply as well as I

could. I set Ned to sew up the edges of the old oil-cloth coat in such a manner as to make of it a water-bottle like those used in the East. I trusted to his ingenuity and dexterity to do this, though we had neither needles nor thread.

Driven to his shifts, Ned, like primitive man, made a needle out of a fish-bone, used the untwisted strands of fine fishing line for threads, and did his work in a workmanlike manner, even taking care to utilise the arms of the coat, as well as the coat itself, for holding the water. This he effected by tying up the ends of the sleeves strongly, after which he carefully tested the retentive capacity of each. I also bade him construct a frame which would hold our bottle or tank upright while it was being filled, so that it might serve the purpose of a well in which we might dip our vessels. I perceived danger in making a regular Eastern water-bottle; such a globular arrangement might upset. Just as he was beginning to work at this frame, which he was making out of timber, it occurred to me that something in the shape of a limekiln constructed of stones would do as well, and would save time

and labour. Ned rather reluctantly desisted from his carpenter's work, and did as I bade him. He built up rapidly some such structure as I had suggested, erecting it of course in the coolness of the cave. When finished, it assumed the form of a mound of stones and gravel, with a bowl-shaped depression in the middle. Into this he inserted his oil-cloth bottle. He made it stand upright in its cavity by making fast what I might call little stone anchors to the mouth of our oil-cloth tank, the anchors of course lying on the outside of the mound. This contrivance kept the mouth open, and prevented our Oriental bottle from collapsing into the cavity.

In the meantime I continually drew water from the failing spring with my fishing-rod-and-porringer contrivance, and though it was slow work, had the big pot full before Ned had completed his tank. I filled also the kettle and the remaining porringer. When Ned declared all ready we together lifted up the pot, and emptied its contents into the tank, and afterwards did the same with the other vessels.

Ned now took my place with the fishing-rod and porringer, for I was quite exhausted. The fishing-rod, as I have already explained, had to be held out with the right hand, the water-drawer all the time standing in an awkward position, and with his arm rigidly extended. Indeed, I always fetched the water. I knew that a labour which was irksome to me would be quite fatiguing to Ned. On this occasion Ned, though he did his best, gave over in about an hour. I think he now for the first time realised that my grosser labours in support of the little establishment deserved from him a more generous recognition. By this time, however, the tank was nearly full. The moonlight was on the sea when I emptied into the tank the last porringer of water. That was a hard day's work. We both felt that we had well earned our supper and night's rest. As for dinner, we had eaten it without allowing the meal to interfere with our task. We had now water enough to last us for some weeks as I calculated. During that interval rain would probably fall and refresh our failing spring. Even a single shower

might be enough to enable us to fill our tank, for we had already planned a contrivance for catching it. So we felt no fear. After a supper, which we ate with much relish after our hard day, we did the Brentford kings again upon our thrones canopied in the living rock, and watched the great red sun sink into the Atlantic, steeping sea and sky with glorious hues. That evening, after a silence which had lasted for some days, Ned trumpeted proudly, and made the echoes ring.

Judge, then, of my emotions, when, next morning, gaily plunging my porringer into the tank, I found it certainly not full. Then I lowered the can to the bottom; still emptiness. There was apparently not a single drop of water in the oil-cloth reservoir, which we had so laboriously filled during the preceding day, and very little in the two arms. Trembling with excitement, I seized the rod and porringer, and hastened away to find whether the spring still yielded. It did, though much more slowly than on the preceding day. I returned, awoke Ned, and told him of the calamity. We first

carefully emptied the arms of what they contained, then drew up the whole tank, and examined it. At one place, unluckily at the very bottom, the glaze of the oil-cloth had been worn away, and through this one little weak spot, the water had slowly trickled and oozed away during the silent watches of the night.

As the spring still yielded, we could lay in a supply of water so far as the containing capacity of the solid vessels extended, but to mend the tank seemed hopeless. We had nothing with which we could stop up that fatal hole. In my fly-book I usually kept a little bit of cobbler's wax for fly-tying, splicing, and other purposes needing waxed thread. But now, when I needed cobbler's wax more than I ever needed it in my life, I had none. Was there any substance within reach by which this fatally frayed portion of the oil-cloth could be made water-tight? We thought hard, but could think of nothing. To sew up the weak spot would be useless; the water would escape through the needle-holes and along the line used for sewing. Examining the cloth carefully, I found two or

three other weak points. To gather up the cloth in a bunch at the frayed points, and tie these bunches strongly with cord would no doubt answer, but the quantity of oil-cloth used up in this manner would have almost completely destroyed the containing power of the whole.

In a most miserable state of mind, I proceeded now to do all that was possible, and this, of course, was to fill our pot, and the other vessels. This day I had to stand with painfully outstretched arm for at least ten minutes before the niggardly and fast-failing spring would fill my little can. When I had been engaged in this mournful work for about an hour and a half, I heard a joyful shout from Ned, who came rushing out of the cave, crying out, "I have it," "I have it." Fearful that Ned's discovery might turn out to be only a mare's nest, I looked dubiously at him until he, pointing to the Old Rake, where she lay wedged between the rocks, shouted the one word "Tar."

I was amazed that I had not thought of this before. Ned drew his knife, and commenced scraping off the tar with which the boat was

plentifully smeared in the coarse manner of our fisher-folk.

Ned boiled his scrapings, mixed with a little water, and painted with it the whole of the oil-cloth, lest there should be still some weak point undetected. The tar he boiled in one of the tin porringers. All porringers sold in our country at that time were able to stand fire, and were, in fact, little pots, used as such for heating milk and such-like purposes. So we laid down our tank anew, and this time with complete success, but it took me two days' hard labour to fill the tank and the spare vessels. On the third day and the fourth I was able to get a little water for current use, and on the fifth the spring gave out altogether.

We now returned to our other industries, making diligent preparation for the winter, and stinted ourselves in the matter of drinking as only those will who have once experienced the horrors of thirst and fear their repetition.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ALL ABOUT SEA-GULLS.

BY JOHN FREEMAN.

ALL this time we lived in the midst of vast flocks of sea-gulls. They were perpetually sailing over us, past us, and under us, and their laugh, a sound which in the vicinity of high cliffs has to me something curiously and indescribably suggestive, sounded all day in our ears. At first I had hoped to be able to shoot them, taking care that those shot should fall upon the platform. But the platform was nowhere more than three yards wide, and very irregular. Generally speaking, unless I shot a gull stone dead, or pounced on it the moment it fell, it used to roll over and was lost. I only retrieved one out of a good many which I shot. Then I found that I was scaring the birds. I

quite ceased to shoot in consequence. I had in my mind another plan for capturing them. It was suggested to me by something that happened on the fourth day after I had begun to fish. I was letting down my line as usual, when I became suddenly aware that something in mid-air had taken the hook, had bolted with it, and that the reel was ringing as if a strong pollock in his first rush were tearing out the line. In fact, a passing sea-gull had swooped on the bait. As I had strong tackle I did not humour this gentleman by playing, but hauled him in incontinently and killed him. I was sorry to have to do so, for I loved sea-gulls.

This, however, was not the first occasion on which I had caught sea-gulls with a hook. Long before this, when I was a very little boy, and, as I now perceive, an abominable little savage, I had captured a roomful of them on a hook baited with fresh meat and set in a ploughed field. From the hook I had previously filed away the barb. The lines I fastened to a stake driven into the earth. As soon as a gull had taken the bait, I used to run out from my place

of concealment, catch the line, and proceed to draw him down out of the air. Then I would disengage him just as I would a fish, and never thinking for a moment of the cruelty of the proceeding, bear him home in triumph, thrust him into a room with his fellow-prisoners, and hurry back to my cruel labours. Indeed, I did not know that I was cruel, only that I was rather clever at catching gulls. I had more than a dozen "pet gulls" in this room, whom I used to feed with fish. Then I got tired of them, partly because they were so dull and stupid, and partly because they made such a mess. So one morning I opened the window and gave them their liberty.

Now, I saw in that accidental capture a means of supplying ourselves with a winter supply of fowl as well as fish, and set to work in earnest. I knew that the flesh of this bird was generally regarded as inedible, but however unsavoury, I knew that it would be of the greatest service to us in sustaining our lives during our abode on the rock. I doubted much whether we could survive the winter on an unvaried diet of fish.

A medical man has since then assured me that growing boys could not survive six weeks eating fish only.

I now began to be a fowler in earnest, and day by day slew a considerable number of gulls of different kinds. These I handed over to Ned to pluck and prepare for salting. He did not like that job at all; he said it was stupid. No doubt it was, but I held him to it nevertheless. He became more cheerful as he thought of the number of interesting things which might be done with the quills and feathers—feather beds, sofas, warm-lined clothes, and I forget what. These birds we salted in the same manner as we had salted the fish—that is to say, in strong brine. Soon we had a very good winter supply of fowl as well as fish. If the quality had been equal to the quantity, we would have been well off, lacking nothing save bread and vegetables in the way of food.

CHAPTER XXIV.

STRANGE FEATURES OF THE DOORWAY.

THE entrance of the cave was rather wide and irregularly funnel-shaped. It narrowed as one passed inwards, so that the opening proper of our cave was not so unlike a doorway with ragged edges. It was rudely rectangular in shape, though broader at the base than at the lintel, like the doorways of old-fashioned Irish churches, as I have seen them engraved in some antiquarian work in my father's library.

One afternoon, as I was standing for a while in this doorway, being tired, I suppose, I supported myself on my left foot and the toe of the right, crossing the right leg over the left—not an uncommon mode of standing at ease. At the same time, to steady myself, I stretched out my right hand against the rock. Any one who wants to stand and lounge will behave so. In

trying to assume that easy posture, I met with a rather bad fall, struck my head against the rock, and got a big and sore lump just above my right ear. It bled too, though I did not notice that at the time. The fact was, that just at the point where I intended to lean the palm of my right hand against the rock, there was no rock but a hole. So my hand glided into vacancy; I lost my balance and fell. Ned was at the time on the ledge outside, engaged in some operation which I forget now. The place where I fell was dark or dusky, being quite at the inner end of what I call the doorway, and just at the point where the cave proper commenced, for inside this passage the cave widened out rapidly. When I rose to my feet, I thrust my hand exploringly into the hole. It was about a foot deep, and seemed as narrow at the entrance as at the other end, and square all through or squarish, which struck me as singular. That night as Ned and I sat together, he noticed the blood on my cheek and neck, and asked me how it came there. By the way, I may here mention that for some nights past we had been in the

enjoyment of lamp-light in our cave. Ned, who was very clever at all sorts of dainty contrivances, had made quite a pretty lamp of stone. He selected one of the shape of a cobbler's lapstone, perfectly smooth and evenly proportioned, limestone, with veins of quartz running through it. The middle of this he scooped out with mallet and chisel, and scraped and polished the inside and edges of the cavity, as if he intended to present it to a museum of elegant curiosities. I thought most of this work a waste of time, but the æsthetic peculiarities of my brother were so engrained and natural to him that I did not restrain him, only passing a joke now and then upon his love of elegance and finish. The wick was of tow, lightly twisted, and the burning portion was upheld by an elegant little supporter of wire, each leg of the wire nicely secured to the outside of the stone with a little dab of tar as round as a threepenny bit. When Ned brought me this *chef d'œuvre* to be inspected and admired, I noticed that even the lower part of the wick was not thrust carelessly into the socket, but was coiled

round there like a ship's rope. Ned got his oil from the sea-gulls, skimming the pot in which we boiled those oleaginous birds, and boiling again what he skimmed off. This he called refined oil. Though all this amused me, I found by experience that Ned's pretty lamp was a real pleasure. The veined marble and the elegant wire contrivance gave me more delight than I confessed. Our existence was so bare of all beauty, that Ned's æsthetics made existence on the rock much more pleasant than it would otherwise have been.

To Ned's question as to the blood on my cheek, I answered by telling him what I have just written.

"I know that hole," he said; "I put my hand into it, but it is not a foot long. It is longer than my arm."

This I denied, somewhat testily perhaps, for my head was still sore, and I was not in the best of humours.

Ned, however, not only stuck obstinately to his opinion, but challenged me to go with him and see which of us was right. The night was

windless, so that we were able to bring the lamp unprotected to the doorway. There Ned went straight to the left jamb, so to speak, and thrust his hand into a hole. Now, the hole which had been the cause of my fall was on the right. There were, therefore, two holes, and I saw at once that the two holes corresponded, and were at even distances from the ground. I stood looking from one to the other in amazement, for instantaneously a whole flood of thoughts and surmises started up in my mind. At home, as in many old-fashioned country houses, the doors were secured by a bar of timber running from socket to socket in the wall on the inside of the door. When the door was to be opened, the bar was shot back into the long socket, out of which at night it was drawn and shot across into the other. Ours, indeed, was never used, but it was there waiting for disturbed times, and was a proof that the house had been built in days when the "White Boys" were abroad in the land. These corresponding holes—one of them deep, the other shallow—proved to me at once that they were intended to strongly hold a door

against some foe. Now, for the first time, I examined this part of our cave carefully, and made other discoveries corroborative of the foregoing surmise. Lower down, at about two feet from the ground, there was another pair of holes also in correspondence—one deep and the other shallow—while in front of both the rock was smooth and even from the ground upward. Also above my head I could just feel with the tips of my fingers the smoothness, evidently artificial, extending too along the lintel. The floor also at this point was quite flat. Ned all this time was clamouring about the original dispute, but his words fell on deaf ears. I took the lamp from him, and examined the edges more carefully. As I expected, I found on one side—the right—lead imbedded in the smooth rock at two points, and at each point a rusty ring of iron—in fact, the end of a bolt protruding from the lead. Yes; there could be no longer any doubt. There had been a door here once. This cavern was once the habitation of man.

Ned, who could put two and two together as well as myself, and who saw the horizontal rings

of the ring-bolts imbedded in lead, perceived also that this was an ancient doorway; that a door once swung on these rings—an exceedingly massy door too; and that it was stoutly held by bars shot athwart it from socket to socket. He was, as might be imagined, at first greatly surprised and interested.

We returned to the place where we now usually passed the evenings together before going to bed. It was at the edge of the heap of stones and gravel, at the inner extremity of the cave. It was warmer here and more windless. Indeed, save when the wind blew due west, and straight into the entrance, the air of the cave was quite calm, for there was no draught. Here Ned had constructed two elegant chairs, with soft seats and backs, and even stuffed elbows, ranged side by side. The softness was supplied by gulls' feathers, secured by ingenious contrivances, while over the whole was disposed the sail-blanket of the Old Rake. Here every evening now found us enthroned, like a pair of Lacedemonian or Brentford kings, contemplating the light of Ned's lamp, chatting over the

events of the day, and making cheerful or doleful forecasts of the future. Latterly our forecasts had been growing more and more doleful, for the water in our tank was coming to the lees, while every day from our lofty platform we saw above us a brazen sky and beneath us the innumerable scintillations of the sunny sea.

"What a singular thing," exclaimed Ned for the hundredth time—"men living in this extraordinary place before us!"

"Why men?" said I. "Why not a man?"

"What man would live here by himself?" replied he.

"A hermit, perhaps," I answered. "It is just such a spot as a hermit might choose."

I said this carelessly, but just as I said it, a thought which eventually proved our salvation started up in my mind.

The idea of a hermit never, I think, occurs to any one without the strongly associated idea of oatcake, running water, and water-cresses. The hermit of tradition and literature burrows his cave, or sets up his little hut in the vicinity of a well or fountain. It at once then occurred to me

that the inhabitant or inhabitants of this cave could never have trusted to such a false and failing spring as ours, or to a water-supply lowered from above, and liable to be cut off by negligence or accidents. There was certainly a perennial spring of water here, and one which was accessible.

I started to my feet, and taking my brother by the arm, I said: "The last time, Ned, you were our preserver; I think that this time I will be. Whoever lived here before us did not live here without fresh water. There is an unfailing spring of pure water in this cave, and it runs under a heap of stones and gravel behind us."

Ned was for setting to work at once, but I said "No," that we should go to bed early, and attack the pile in the morning.

"Indeed, Jack," he continued, "I think you are right in your guess that it was not smugglers or outlaws who inhabited this cave before us, but a hermit. I will tell you why. You remember when we came here there were a lot of sea-pinks growing over the outer entrance. Well, when I

hooked these down, and made the rock bare, I thought I saw the outlines of a man, with outspread arms like that" (extending his arms as if he would measure a fathom). "I intended to make you look at it too, but you were engaged at the time, and I forgot it afterwards, and it was rather like the figure over the door of Templebrandan, only not so distinct. Indeed, I thought then that it was only a curious natural formation of the rock."

Templebrandan, which means the Temple or Church of Brandan, was an old ruined building near a mountain lake, which we had often fished together, in a wild, desolate, and uninhabited part of the country.

CHAPTER XXV.

WATER, WATER.

It was a long time before I fell asleep that night. I felt very much disturbed in my mind, a sensation new to me, for I always enjoyed excellent health and spirits. My atmosphere, external and internal, seemed pervaded by the van of some awful and indescribable calamity, formless, not to be comprehended or guessed at, and the more terrible for that reason. The quiet breathing of my brother by my side, and his beautiful serene countenance upon which the lamplight faintly played—for I kept the little lamp burning—were powerless to dissipate this strange sensation. Our material prospects were certainly gloomy enough. My confident assertion that water ran somewhere beneath the stone heap, though half believed in at the time I made it, seemed to me now a miser-

able, vainglorious boast. Even should it turn out to be correct, and even if we should continue to battle through the winter victoriously against cold and famine, how would we fare in the ensuing winter, when all our timber should be exhausted? The experience of the past summer proved that fishermen seldom or never visited this stormy, bleak headland.

If we contrived to maintain existence in this cavern, we would grow more and more barbarous. Naked and filthy, we would perhaps lose all resemblance to humanity. Such dreadful thoughts with corresponding images filled my mind, and yet I was aware that it was not all this or any such calamity of the mundane kind that I apprehended, but something quite different, of which I could form no conception, or represent at all to my imagination. The cavern seemed full of noises to-night. Once I thought I heard low laughter, as of evil men chuckling together, while they awaited the moment which should transfer a victim into their power. More than once I shouted a fierce interrogation, fortunately without awakening my brother. A

very ludicrous circumstance, which was to me for some minutes anything but ludicrous, did more to compose my mind than all my philosophy and religion. Amongst other curious sounds which I heard, or thought that I heard, was one so distinct and peculiar, that I could not attribute it to fancy, or to any natural cause. It was plainly something moving to and fro in the cavern. The sound was not dull, but sharp, a ceaseless clicking—something like that made by the claws of a dog as he walks about a bedroom in the silence of the night, when one hears nothing but the sharp click of the claws. Some beast, I said, of that kind was moving here. I could see nothing, though the sound sometimes seemed to come from a point two or three yards away. At last I got up, took the lamp in my left hand, and a pebble in the right, and went straight towards the sound. The result was absurd enough. The cause of my alarm was only a crab, one of those which we had taken, but had neglected to secure. The poor beast was roaming about either in quest of food, or searching out the way to the sea.

This absurd experience reminded me of something which happened at home that very summer. One night we were startled by an awful scream from the kitchen, and rushing thither, discovered one of the servants in hysterics brought on by terror. My little brother Charley had let loose some crabs in the backyard; one of them came through the open kitchen door, and walked, clicking and clacking, across the flags towards the servant, who was sitting there alone, and who heard the approaching steps while she could see nothing. This was a week-long joke at home, and yet I, who was one of the chief laughers, was now frightened by a harmless creeping thing of the same kind.

I was awaked by Ned while it was still dark, but knew from the noises made by the sea-gulls that morning was at hand. I uncovered the embers, laid on fresh timber, put down the pot half filled with salt water in which breakfast would be boiled, and joined Ned in his labours, who was already hurling pebbles from the stone heap towards the cavern's mouth. The floor was smooth and sloped slightly outwards, and as

all the stones were somewhat globular, at all events ground smooth by the action of the waves, any stone set in motion and in the right direction returned to the sea. It was a new mode of exercise, far livelier than most of the tasks at which we had been recently engaged, and being young and strong, and withal working for an object, we enjoyed it. But we had to pay for our pleasure : we were thirstier than usual after breakfast, and that was a serious matter, for the next day would certainly find us at the end of our water-supply. All day we worked steadily at the heap, removing stones in the manner which I have described. We put the gravel in a bag supplied by the sail. I, as the older and stronger, carried the bag and emptied it. For shovels we had only planks stripped from the boat.

At the end of this day we discovered that the cavern was longer than we had supposed, and that what we thought was the inner extremity was not really so, but lengthened into a sort of pocket or tunnel of unknown length.

I was dreadfully afraid that our further progress in this tunnel would be blocked by some great pebble. One large stone, indeed, we did meet with, which we were unable to stir with our united exertions. At last we determined to let it alone and work round it. Had we known then the hidden meaning and significance of that big stone!—but we did not.

The second night we went to bed suffering somewhat from thirst. We had still about a cupful apiece left in the tank, but I thought it wiser to keep that last drink for the next day. Ned, always buoyant and hopeful, spoke invariably of the spring as if it were actually there, and as if in order to get water it was only necessary to clear away the obstructions. I myself truly did not share his expectations, though I said or did nothing to dash them; but I did now begin to entertain a hope of rain-water, perceiving by certain signs that the long spell of dry weather would soon be broken. This day we drank nothing save that cupful. At night the torment of the thirst kept us awake. In fact, we only lay down to rest. After a short

time we got up, and went again at the work, toiling under the light of the lamp. The stones did not present so much difficulty as the gravel. We had given up as needlessly laborious the task of emptying our gravel bags into the sea. We now disposed it on both sides of the cave, just outside the tunnel. This day Ned was lamed by a falling stone, and was of little use, though he did his best. We ate little or nothing this day, and both suffered horribly from thirst. The tunnel showed no sign of coming to an end. At the point where we now worked it was nearly as wide as its entrance. My muscles, heart, hope were all failing; Ned was still as a stone; he was quite worn out. I, too, was in fact worn out, but I had made a compact with myself to work till ten, and my mind overcame the fatigue of the body, so that, though staggering under light loads, I still worked on. I worked without looking at my watch. At last I looked at it. It was twenty minutes past ten. With a groan, I flung myself down at full length on the spot. It was all over, then; I had done my best. After half an hour I went to the cave's entrance.

Though the sky was cloudy, the air was warm, and there was no sign of rain.

I had not forgotten my fixed resolution. I was resolved to fling Ned into the sea when he began to lose the use of his reason. I told him to pray with me. With lips dry as dust we prayed together, seemingly for the last time that night. When we had ended, Ned said : " I am sure God will not forsake us, and that water is at hand. Something tells me that there is water in the tunnel, and that we are near it." The rest, and perhaps the soothing influence of the prayer, had somewhat revived me. I returned to the heap, and worked for perhaps half an hour, but made little progress. When I crawled back to Ned, for this time I was unable to walk, I perceived his eyes bright and glittering.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AND AGAIN WATER.

After one glance I did not dare to look at him again. I sat near him, but we did not speak. I think, in supreme crises of the kind which we were now experiencing, the soul retires into herself, and becomes more and more solitary. How many hours we sat so I cannot tell. The time seemed like years. At last I looked at Ned, hearing him make some movement. He had risen upon his elbow, and was looking backwards over his shoulder with a singular expression in his eyes. Suddenly he sprang upon his knees, and with forward-bent head, and eyes of eager enquiry, continued to gaze. Those who look intently at an object make their eyes smaller, but my brother's continued to dilate as he looked. His mouth was open. His face had

grown dreadfully emaciated during the last three days. For the last hour I had sat nursing a dreadful purpose. I found that the moment had arrived for me to put it into execution.

I looked in the same direction, but saw nothing. He was looking towards the interior cavity, that which was still blocked with stones and gravel. He laid his hand on my arm, as if to direct my attention to some object at which he gazed.

"What is it, Ned?" I whispered.

"Don't you see it, Jack?" he replied, also in a whisper.

"No! What?"

"The cloud," he said. "Very soft-looking and white, and bright. There are flashings in it, too, of many colours. I hear the ringing of bells and smell sweet odours. Look, there is something alive there. Something is taking shape, and the cloud is going away. It is a man."

This last he cried aloud, and as he did so started to his feet. So did I.

"God and Christ have mercy on our souls

then!" I cried. "Come into the open air, Ned, come on the platform." I said this soothingly, but with a terrible purpose.

"I will not go on the platform," he said; "I know well what is in your heart. I have known it all along; I have seen it in your eyes. You want to pitch me into the sea. See! the man beckons you."

"Then you will come, whether you will or not," I cried; and, staggering to my feet, rushed towards him, intending to drag him by main force to the mouth of the cavern and cast him into the sea. Probably I was half mad myself at the time, but this purpose had been long since sternly conceived in my mind. "Ned over first, then myself, rather than that we should both die here, raging, blaspheming lunatics." Such had been all along my resolve. Yet I did not lay hands on him. The fixed, intent gaze with which he contemplated the sight unseen by me, and the calmness with which he had delivered his last words, momentarily checked me. Again I followed the direction of his eyes, and again saw nothing—nothing but the dense

darkness, for the rays of the little lamp did not illumine that part of the cave.

"Do you not see him, Jack? He is beckoning to you, not to me. He speaks to you. Don't you hear him? No! Then you are deaf as well as blind. His voice is louder than a trumpet's. He says words which I don't understand. But he stamps with his foot, looking at you, and points to the tunnel."

"What is he like?"

"His head is shaven or bald. His clothes long, loose, and brown. There is a hood between his shoulders and a cord round his waist. There is a rosary and a cross hanging from the cord. He is long and lean, with piercing black eyes and a face like an eagle's. His feet are half bare. Leave me here. Return to the tunnel and dig for water; for me, Jack, for me. See! he turns and leads the way. There, he is gone. Don't be cruel or wild, Jack. You are my protector and guardian; why should you kill me? You think I am mad, but I am not. The man was there, and I know he is sent to save us."

Ned staggered as he said this. I sprang to

his side, when he collapsed softly and gently in my arms in a swoon. I succeeded in bearing him to the entrance of the cave, where I dashed salt water on his face. When he came to himself, his first words were :

" Leave me now, Jack. Do what the man told you."

Dazed and wild, but suddenly endued with strength, owing, doubtless, to the terrible excitement, I hastened back to the tunnel and wrought with fury, flinging the stones behind me, and working out the gravel with the board which I had been using as a spade. The little lamp, resting on a ledge of the rock near me, gave its friendly light. Ned dragged himself up to me, and made at least a show of assistance. His appeal to me for exertion had been of the tenderest character, and touched me deeply. I was his protector and guardian. It was right that I should dig for this hidden fount till my heart was broken with the agony of sore labour and thirst. " One more effort," I kept saying, " and there is water for Ned."

" Stop now," he said; " I feel as if I could

hear anything. Lift me. Lay my ear to the place whence you drew out that large stone."

I did so; Ned listened. What a moment! "No," he said sadly, "I hear nothing; but the water is near. You will get to it before your strength fails. The man would not mock us."

I was lying prone while Ned spoke.

"Bring me something to eat, Ned," I said, "and the flask of whisky. You will find it wrapped up in seaweed between the beam and the wall."

Ned did so. He returned with some cold boiled fish and the flask. I ate the fish, and drank a mouthful of the whisky, caring little for that additional torture, plunged as I was in such a sea of sorrows and pains. Again, contrary to expectation, for I believed I was now too far gone to rally, my strength revived once more, and again, strange to say, with a certain furious energy I assailed the heap which lay before me. I was now conscious that my mind was strangely affected. If there be such a thing as a waking nightmare, and I see no reason why there should not, as well as a sleep-

ing one, it was by this strange malady that I was now oppressed—oppressed, but, thank God! not overthrown. In dreams, too, we seem to wrestle against evil things, and to conquer them.

It seemed to me that the cave was full of horrible voices and malignant faces, faces of menace, and voices which shouted at me to desist. I thought evil hands were laid upon me. More than once I turned round and roared furiously at imaginary foes.

Ned said that during the whole of these last labours I seemed to him to be insane. Again I heard Ned's voice—

"Draw me thither again, Jack," he said, "for I cannot walk or crawl. I think I shall hear something this time."

I did so. Then I took the lamp and brought it near in order to see my brother's half face as he lay with his cheek against the heap. O God, with what an inrushing of tides of hope through every fibre of my being I beheld the quick flash of ecstasy, like sudden light, that illuminated his features!

"I hear it," he cried. "I hear the water running. It is no fancy, Jack. I hear it clearly."

"Thank God!" I shouted; "and you shall have the first drink, and a long one and a strong one." Again I worked away furiously, tossing the debris behind me. At the end of perhaps a quarter of an hour I applied my own ear to the heap. Shall I ever forget that moment, or the sound which now reached my ears? Hardly had I stooped down to listen when I sprang again to my feet and screamed aloud for joy. Yes; there, within the stones and gravel, I heard clearly the liquid lapse of waters, gurgling and hissing there unseen—unseen perhaps for a thousand years, but gurgling and hissing there now as through the centuries. Five minutes later, as well as I can calculate, I was flinging out stones wet with water, and at last felt the rush of water on my hands, and saw it gleaming in the light of the lamp. To Ned, as the true discoverer of the same, I awarded the first drink, but when he seemed not about to make an end, I dragged him away violently by the

legs. Then I dived down and drank, and only desisted because I felt Ned tugging furiously at my own. We both now continued to drink alternately, and also just as regularly to impress on each other's minds the necessity of moderation. But I know that we both drank that night all that we wanted, and also know that we experienced from those tremendous draughts no subsequent uneasiness whatsoever. That indeed was a glorious hour. You, my reader, know what it is to drink when you are extremely thirsty; you will guess from that what cold spring water was to us when we were from thirst at the point of death.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A PAIR OF WASSAILERS.

As soon as we had quenched that burning thirst we turned our thoughts to supper. Soon the pot, in its three-sided receptacle above the crackling fire, was bubbling and simmering around the fish and the bird which were to be our supper. It was meagre fare, indeed, but since then I have often eaten venison with less relish than in those days I ate the rancid and oily flesh of sea-gulls. I have mentioned that we laid in a supply of samphire, not much indeed, and not improved by brine and sun-drying, but a pleasant condiment to our hard fare, nevertheless. Ned too, by an ingenious contrivance of his own, had managed to hook up from below a good deal of edible rock-weeds—*myvain*, *dillisk*, which the Scotch people call

dulse, *corrigeen moss* and *sloke*, or, as it is written in cookery-books, *lever*. To-night we boiled some samphire with the fish and fowl, and Ned stewed some sloke in one of the tin porringers. For the proper cooking of this sea-vegetable a copper stewpan is necessary, also butter and other ingredients, but Ned's sloke was excellent, nevertheless. In short, we had a right royal supper—it was now about one o'clock in the morning—a supper made all the more delightful, not only by the terrible experiences through which we had passed, but by the low, liquid, never-ceasing voice of our new-found friend and saviour, the little stream rushing through the inner extremity of the tunnel in which our cavern terminated. I now bethought me a second time of the flask of whisky, which, along with the other contents of the locker, I had stored away in a sort of natural pocket on the right side of the cave, behind the great beam, and announced my intention of making whisky punch. Neither of us, indeed, had the least taste for ardent liquors, with the flavour of which we were hardly acquainted, but we had

always connected the idea of that beverage with joyful occasions. On Christmas Eve my mother regularly brewed for us all tumblers of raspberry-vinegar punch, which we used to absorb with great hilariousness, speech-making, and toasts. So now my announcement was greeted with a cheer by Ned. Our tea, of course, had long since been exhausted, but there was some sugar left. First dropping in two lumps, and adding plenty of hot water, I poured about half a glass of whisky into each tumbler, or rather into the vessels which we called tumblers, and on this thin beverage, which, however, was not thin to us, proceeded to hold wassail.

Ned now produced his bugle, on which he had not blown a note for many days, and his cheerful ringing melodies were very sweet to hear under present joyful conditions.

Conscious that I had drunk so much, I now endeavoured to withstand the pangs of thirst, which again began to assail me. Finally, when Ned too said that he was suffering, I flung prudence to the winds. Again we approached the wonderful fountain and drank our fill, let

the water pour over our heated heads, and dabbled with our hands in the stream.

"There is more where that comes from," cried Ned, as he stripped to the waist and bathed all the upper portion of his body in the small but rushing river.

At last we lay down to sleep, and waked as I have already mentioned, without being conscious of any evil effects resulting from our huge potations of the previous night.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MAKING THINGS SNUG FOR WINTER.

NEXT day we did almost nothing. There was no immediate necessity for exertion, while our sufferings, and labours, and the awful excitement of the previous night ascending surely to dementia in both of us, left us quite slack and lethargic. There was happiness, however, in our lethargy, and though we moved about little, we talked a great deal. This day, for the first time since landing on the rock, we felt cold, and kept the fire not only alive, as we always did, but blazing the whole day, while we lay outstretched on each side of it, talking to one another across the flames. Of course we talked a great deal about the apparition which Ned saw, or thought he saw. He said the face was not at all that of a meek monk; that it was the face of a high, proud, impetuous, and passionate

sort of man; that the nose was high, pronounced, and aquiline, and the eyes black, piercing, and fierce; that there were scars upon the face and forehead (he described to me those scars accurately), and that the hand which he raised repeatedly — the right hand — lacked three fingers, the little finger, and those which chiromantists call Apollo and Saturn He said that the figure was tall, too, but bowed in the shoulders, as if from study; that its motions were in no way those of a student, but full of freedom; and that, in spite of his monkish garb, he looked more like a warrior than a monk, and even a warrior who was accustomed to be obeyed, and who could not understand how anyone could be slow to obey his commands. Ned, too, said that his rosary was short, not descending below the knee, and that it had no cross. He otherwise described the figure most graphically, for, as I have said, it was photographed on his mind—painted would be a better word, for of course photographs—daguerreotypes, as we used to call them—do not show colours. I had to argue much with him before he would consent to think

that what he seemed to see so clearly was a hallucination, such a figure as those we see in dreams, worked out into seeming visibility by a disturbed mind and disordered nerves. He made much of the fact that by following the monk's directions we had found the water, but I pointed out that the dream-figure, being shaped by his imagination, would act in accordance with whatever idea happened at the moment to be uppermost in his own mind. During my final struggles, as I worked towards the water, I had myself seemed to be opposed by queer nightmarish things. In fact, as I reminded Ned many times, we were both maddened by thirst and our brains on fire, and yet in the end Ned's stronger conviction to some degree prevailed over mine.

Most of our conversation settled steadily upon one theme, and that was the monk. Whether a hallucination or not, this being had saved our lives, and for my part, I sometimes inclined to Ned's belief that he was veritably a minister of God sent to befriend us in our adversity. Unlike other boys, who have been affected by

the incredulous and mocking spirit of the eighteenth century continued into the nineteenth, scepticism with regard to the supernatural had not touched us. To my father and mother, Calvinists as they were, and sincerely pious, the world was filled with spirits, good and bad, ministers of God or of his enemy. Neither of them would have been greatly surprised if they saw angels, or if the arch-enemy were to take shape before them in a visible form. In short, the monk was for us a real spiritual presence, and we conversed about him long and earnestly as such, endeavouring to guess out his history, explain his continued existence here, and construct his biography, which we felt must have been a remarkable one, for we concluded that he was prince and warrior ere he became a monk.

When we had recovered our strength, the first thing which I perceived should be done was to follow the monk's example and make a strong door for our cave. This I perceived to be necessary, not only in order to exclude the wild winds of winter—and winter was now

upon us—but also to protect ourselves from the tremendous billows which furious storms blowing from the west might urge up out of the Atlantic even to the lofty situation in which we now were. One such billow, even the crest of it, rolling into and filling the cave, would sweep us to destruction. I was aware, indeed, that no wooden barrier which we could construct would withstand the full impact of a great rolling surge smiting against it with the force of many hundred tons, but I believed that only when a storm of exceptional severity was raging could the waves reach this point, and that then only the crests of the waves would strike against the door, with comparatively feeble force, being half made up of mere foam. The monk, at all events, whose conduct ought to be our guide, had thought it advantageous to bar out wind and wave, and so would we. We now completely broke up the Old Rake—the poor, faithful, honest, and uncomplaining creature—carefully saving every bit of stick and iron used in her construction, and brought all into our cave. She was, as my readers are by this time well

aware, by no means a pleasure boat, but a huge clumsy yawl, with timbers thick and strong. The bows we broke up first, as they projected over the sea. We brought all the timber into our cave, and for several days now were diligently engaged in making our door. This was slow work, owing to our want of that most useful article, a saw. All the planks we had to cut to the right length with our hatchet and chisel. We made the door of double planks, not only to get increased strength, but in order that it might better fit the interval between the cross-bars and the opposing face of the rock, which was considerable. Otherwise it would hang loosely, and be battered to and fro between the rock and the bars. We were smiths too in those day, and contrived to make hooks or hangers for the door, so that it would swing upon the bolt rings which we had discovered imbedded in the rock. We made them by first reddening, and then bending, two iron bolts, a portion of the boat's fastenings. They served the purpose well enough, and saved us the necessity of shifting the whole of the big heavy door every time

that we wished to go out on the platform, or admit air and light into our house. From the keel, which we split in two with our hatchet, and cut and doubled, we made the bars. When this work was ended, we were not a little pleased with ourselves. We could now face with some confidence the storms of winter. Indeed, within a fortnight of the conclusion of our work, its strength was put to the test. One very wild night I was awaked by a noise of an unusual character, quite different from the howling and whistling and dull thumpings of the billows against the cliffs to which I had been listening all day, and which had been in my ears as I went to sleep. The unusual sound which awaked me was the splashing of water against the door. From time to time heavy spray, not like mere rain, but like water cast in bucketfuls, beat heavily upon it. Occasionally there was a sound as of climbing water, then a strong impact against the door, causing the timbers to strain and creak, while along all the interstices water streamed in abundantly. Then the wave fell, and the clatter and splash of the driven spray

sounded again. Whether these waves, had the entrance been open, would have flooded the cave I do not know; but I was very glad, indeed, that the question had become for us a theoretical one. I did not awake Ned, who slept soundly through all this, and went to sleep again myself shortly after. In the morning I found that the door had been driven from its hinges, the fastenings of our hooks having given way. But I fixed everything again, and in a more secure manner.

When we finished the door, we, as it were, settled down for the winter. Fishing was out of the question, and so almost to the same degree was gull-catching, for the gulls now spent most of their time inland, feeding in the fields. A stranger visiting our country in the winter-time might be pardoned for thinking the gull a land bird, so thronged with them were then all the tillage fields, where they used to settle down and feed like crows.

We now became aware that we were very ragged, our clothes being almost worn out. We cut up the big blanket and patched ourselves with bits of the same. The piece of

rope, the end of the hawser, was useful to us here, and saved our cord. From the strands of it we got thread sufficient for our purposes. Fish-bones, in which at the thicker end we drilled eyeholes, were our needles. Though our prospects were so mournful, and almost hopeless, we were by no means miserable. Youth is very hopeful. Though we could not see from what direction assistance would come to us, we believed that ere the end of the next summer we would in some way escape from this inhospitable, and yet too I must confess, hospitable perch upon the cliffs. We had one plan from which we hoped much, though its execution would evidently involve an enormous slaughter of sea-gulls. We hoped to accomplish a rope, twisted from the strong tendons of their legs, which, with the aid of our lines, would enable us to descend into the sea some fine morning in settled weather. Thence, with the aid of floating timber, or by dint of sheer swimming, we could work along the cliffs to some coos or landing-place. My heart indeed misgave me at times about that rope, but for the most part I

was carried away by Ned's ardour and hopefulness. In short, we believed in our rope. We talked, too, about parachutes and I know not what. Somehow or other, in the course of the long summer, and with little else to do save to work out our escape, we would be sure to get off. Of this past summer we had only a small portion at our disposal, and most of that had been taken up by the preparation of food for the winter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WINTER AMUSEMENTS.

As winter set in, time began to hang heavy on our hands, especially on mine, for Ned seemed hardly ever at a loss for something to do. I was of a more active temperament physically, and physical exercise was an absolute necessity to me. For letting off my superfluous energies, I contrived to make and erect a parallel bar. It was a portion of the boat's keel—oak. I worked it round and smooth with my knife. The cavern, as may be remembered, grew narrow at its inner extremity, in the neighbourhood of the spring. Here, at a certain point, I fixed my bar transversely in the rocky passage, about eight feet from the ground, hammering the ends into their places by heavy blows, and so making it as secure as if the bar had been riveted in the rock.

I spent a good deal of each day on this bar, performing all the evolutions which our drill and gymnastic master had taught us at school, and even invented others. Ned, too, revolved here a good deal, making his long legs gyrate, but was far less furiously addicted to the amusement than I was. His endless ingenuity and deft fingers were resources of amusement which I lacked.

We made a ball and bat of oak. With these rude inventions we played cricket—single-wicket—against the door of our house. While that amusement lasted, a visitor—if by a miracle a visitor should arrive—might almost think that he had overfallen boys at play in the hall of some large house such were the shouts and cries, "Leg before." "Out." "Oh, no, I never stirred." "Yes, you did." "I couldn't see the middle stump." "That was no run." "You never touched the mark with your bat." We had fierce disputes too, and even quarrels, as boys will. Once, I am ashamed to say, that, provoked by Ned's cheek, I licked him, after which we remained apart in

morose silence. That amusement, however, did not last long; the ball lost its roundness, and neither of us felt inclined to undergo the labour of making another.

Casting pebbles at a mark was another pastime at which we played a good deal, so much so that we both became extremely good shots, hurling stones not only with great accuracy but with great force. With us, a part of the game was to break the stone by the strength of the throw. We took stones of equal size. I gave Ned odds in the matter of distance. The excellence of a shot consisted partly in the accuracy of aim and partly in smashing the stone. A stone smashed beat a bull's eye, when the bull's eye missile survived or was only chipped. That cave practice of ours in stone-throwing has been of great service to me since, and on one occasion saved my life and that of a comrade. Out of reach of our firearms, we were attacked by black fellows, two of whom I brought down—killing one—simply by stone-throwing. I aimed at their heads, and hit each head that I aimed at. This happened

only last year, and would be worth telling if it were not a digression.

Sometimes I declaimed "Paradise Lost," a great deal of which I knew by heart, Ned sometimes applauding, more often bidding me "Shut up."

No doubt there were moments when our dismal situation seemed harder than we could bear, but we had both an unusual amount of health, happiness, and general vitality on which to draw; and though our food was wretched, I dare say that it nourished us better than food of the best would have nourished other boys brought up less simply and healthfully than we had been. I am well aware of that beneficent provision of Nature by which things disagreeable slide from the memory, while the picturesque, the bright, and pleasant remain; but I am sure that, upon the whole, our time on the rock was far from being one of sheer unhappiness, and I am certain that I would be very sorry indeed to find all those strange experiences blotted out of my memory.

Ned, who was always decorating and improv-

ing, was almost never at a loss for something to do. His bright fancy suggested task after task, and his ingenuity and dexterity enabled him to accomplish many of them in spite of the extreme poverty of the materials. One of Ned's bright ideas turned out most useful, brought a welcome aid to our larder, and possibly enabled us to pass the winter without sickness. In the locker, there was a small bit of glass, and everything, even the smallest and least important article found there, we had carefully husbanded. In overhauling these articles, Ned discovered the bit of glass, tied it up carefully in feathers, and laid it upon a ledge, which, I think, must have been made by our eremite, bidding me mark where it lay, and not disturb it for fear of accidents. Then he busied himself with the construction of a lanthorn. The penthouse of the lanthorn was composed of timber and dried sea-gull skin, cleverly secured and made air-tight with tar. At the top there was a chimney, but this was nearly closed by a cap or hood which fitted down over it. The object, of course, was to permit the escape of smoke in such a

manner as would not allow the wind to blow out the light within. He took a long time to make it, but when finished, it was a beauty. It was even provided with a reflector, consisting of bits of an old broken brass fishing-reel, polished to the highest lustre by Ned's nimble fingers. The bit of glass made one side, or rather part of one side, of the lanthorn. This lanthorn drew perfectly, and was very useful to us when the agitation of the air in our cave would not allow the open lamp to remain alight. But Ned's bright imagination suggested to him that this lanthorn might also be the means of providing us with fresh food as a respite from the briny birds which filled our larder. Every night, if it was not too wild, he fed his lamp at nightfall, and securely fastened it in the face of the cliff, a little on one side of the cave's entrance. The lanthorn, so placed, was a lure to attract birds thither to their undoing. On the morning of the first night he had taken nothing; but the following morning when I went out upon the platform before breakfast, I found there, just beneath the lamp, a pigeon and a woodcock,

which had dashed their lives out against the rock, and had fallen on to the platform. One can imagine what a welcome addition to our larder these birds proved, and this was by no means the end. Sometimes, indeed, a whole week elapsed without our taking anything, but very often we had a sea-gull, often woodcock or snipe, or other small land birds, and once—a great event—nine pigeons of the slate-coloured variety, a whole flock having evidently rushed there to death during the night. The slate-coloured pigeons are very common along that coast. They feed inland, but roost and build their nests in the caves, and were always known to us as cave pigeons. They are excellent eating. This intermittent supply of fresh food was very welcome, and because it was intermittent and not to be relied upon, yielded too a good deal of excitement, and so helped to reduce, for me at least, the monotony of our life.

Ned, indeed, was always at something. When there was something actually needing to be done, especially something which necessitated vigorous muscular exertion, I myself was active enough,

but otherwise rather inclined to be lazy. I was fond of reading, which Ned was not, and now seemed to feel my brain clamouring for mental food of any sort. To fill somewhat the aching inner void, I composed a number of poems, suggested by the situation, even one long epic describing our adventures since we left home.

It may be remembered that on the morning of our start from home, I had thrust into my top-coat pocket a book, which I thought to be the history of Henry Fifth's French Wars. It was not, but, as I discovered that same morning while we were in the Cave of the Mermaids, only a grammar of the Gaelic or Irish language, with other Gaelic matter, the whole bound up quite brilliantly as if it were some pleasant work of light literature. Into this book, which was no book, I frequently looked, and as often laid it aside with a "Pish" or a sigh. How I hungered for something to read in those days!

CHAPTER XXX.

A LINGUISTIC RELAXATION BECOMES IMPORTANT.

EVENTUALLY I was obliged to fall back on what I thought to be the only book in the cave, and now spent a good deal of each day and night in mastering the Irish tongue of my ancestors, for though my father's family was of English extraction, my mother's was pure Milesian, being a branch of the nation of the O'Malleys, a renowned seafaring race in the west of Ireland. My mother, indeed, had not a spark of race enthusiasm, the spiritual side of her nature being fed wholly by religion, by the Bible, and many books of devotion which I often tried to read, but could not. The fact of her Irish extraction, however, and the consciousness that Irish blood ran in my veins, caused me to have a kindly feeling towards all the Gaelic side of

life in Ireland. Though I could not speak Gaelic, I knew a great number of common Gaelic expressions and phrases in general use amongst the people. This slight acquaintance with the spoken language was of very considerable help to me now in my grammatical studies, for it provided me with something to go upon at the start. I am obliged to be a little particular here, for, as the reader will learn ere long, these Gaelic studies of mine were of the highest importance to us in the sequel of our adventures.

Ned, indeed, had a profound aversion for Irish, and used to speak of it as a "horrid old language." I was philosopher enough to perceive the cause of his aversion. Ned loved the beautiful in all things, and as Irish was only now spoken by the lowest and most backward, one might say most barbarous of the people, it came to him, as it were, surrounded by all manner of uncouth and disagreeable associations. He had not sufficient imagination to perceive that a tongue once spoken by kings, chieftains, and gentlemen, and refined and developed by scholars such as Ireland once

admittedly produced, must be essentially something very different from a vile patois.

The grammar, which was an excellent one, was provided not only with an English key to the exercises, but with a copious glossary taken from some other Irish book. After the glossary there came, also in Gaelic, a copy of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, as I was not long in finding out from the long pedigree with which it commences. This Gospel was of great assistance to me, for in English I knew it by heart or very nearly so. From the grammar and the glossary I filled my memory with a great many Irish words, which I increased by the study of the Gospel; for I did not take long in mastering the grammatical construction.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CACHE.

One evening I said to Ned, "What have you been hammering at all day?" I had been long aware of a dull sound of thumping going on around me, but without attaching any importance to it. Even had I looked I could not have seen Ned at his work, for the cave was dark, save at the spot where I lay with Ned's little lanthorn before me. Whenever the door was opened we used this instead of the lamp. At night Ned fixed it up outside the entrance. Then we shut and bolted the door, and lit the lamp.

At first he would not tell me, but when I gave him clearly to perceive that I would not stand his nonsense, he delivered himself to this effect:—

"The monk might have had a secret cup-

board in these walls, some place that would open with a spring if I struck it at the right point. So I have been tapping the walls all day. But I could not work well without the lanthorn, and you were using that."

"Well," I said, "let us both work together at it to-morrow, taking the lanthorn with us. Or, better, we will keep the door closed, and one of us will take the lamp and the other the lanthorn."

I was surprised at my own stupidity. A close and searching examination of the walls, floor, and even roof of this cavern, which was once the abode of man, was a task which we should certainly have taken in hands long since.

Next morning, such was our eagerness, we began work before breakfast. Ned continued at the wall which he had been examining yesterday. I admired his tactics, for he drew a distinguishable mark round each square foot of the rock, and then he made a perfect examination of the place which it enclosed. He worked on the north wall of the cave, and only at a height to which he could reach conveniently without

standing on anything. Each of us worked with a short stick and bit of stout timber, using both like chisel and mallet. I took the south wall, using the lanthorn; Ned had the open lamp. There was not much now in way of stone and gravel to bar exploration. We had already cleared out most of this, working at it from time to time.

By dinner-time we had discovered nothing. After dinner I settled down for the evening to my grammar, glossary, and Gospel. Ned, who had been working all day in an easy, *dilettante* fashion, went at his wall again. While I read I could hear the little thuds of his hammer, and when I looked up saw his small head of curly black hair, and his peering, serious face lit up by the light of the lamp. It stood upon a rest close to his face. As he shifted his position he shifted the rest. He was now tapping his wall for the second time, working at a point above the marks of his last progress. He worked from the door to the fountain. He was standing on a short ladder which he had made for himself, and which

enabled him to tap with ease at about two feet above his own height. In his place, I would have been satisfied with two or three big flat stones, one on top of the other, but Ned was always Ned. I noticed how careful and systematic was his exploration. He paused frequently, and holding the lamp close against the rock, picked at it or rubbed with his fingers, peering keenly at everything. In his progress he had advanced within a few yards of the fireplace. He had just shifted the ladder and rest, and was about to sound a new place, when I saw him drop both hands, lean a little backwards, and look at something much in the same way as a connoisseur looks at a picture,—that is to say, with his head turned sideways. Then he ran the palm of his right hand over the rock wall in a manner which suggested that the place beneath his hand was smooth and unobstructed, which, as I knew, our cavern walls generally were not, also to feel along the limitations or boundaries of that smooth space. Then he looked in a startled manner at me. My eyes went down at once to the book. My heart was

beating so loud at the moment that I could hear it. Ned had discovered something, but what? It was his discovery, and I determined to let him work it out to the end by himself, without interference. Seeing me apparently absorbed, he struck the wall softly with the fleshy side of his fist. His stick and mallet fell rattling on the floor of the cave.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Come here, Jack, come here at once. I have found something," he cried.

In a minute I was at his side, standing on a small heap of big stones.

"This is a stone panel," he said. "See, it is loose. It is the cover of a secret chamber in the rock."

There, sure enough, was something that did look like a rectangular stone panel let into the rock from above, about two feet long by a foot wide, evidently a panel, for when Ned struck it again it shook. The lower part of it was about five feet nine inches from the ground, so a tall man might easily and even conveniently raise it out of its grooves in the rock, and again drop

it into its place. A purchase for the fingers was supplied by two holes in the upper rim. I placed some stones against the wall and stood on them by Ned's side, who was still on his ladder.

"Lift it, Jack," said Ned in a whisper, as if he feared someone would overhear us. "Whatever shall we find here? I wonder, is it right?"

I raised the panel, and descending from my heap, laid it against the wall and got up again. One swift glance which I had cast into the aperture revealed nothing. I told Ned it was his find, and that he should make the search. The mouth of the cavity seemed blocked with a quantity of yellowish fuzzy stuff, which became dust when touched. Ned swept it away with his hands, and held his lamp to the aperture.

We looked for the yellow gleam of gold, but not a sparkle caught our eye anywhere. Searching more carefully, we discovered an iron cup with a chain attached, both exceedingly decayed from the action of rust, the remains of a bronze knife, some beads made of the crystallized stone called "Kerry diamonds," and some other

articles, or the débris of articles, which I need not specify. One find, however, we did make, which proved ultimately of the most vital importance to us both, viz. a leathern book-satchel containing a manuscript still in very good preservation. After having spent the evening in poring over the contents of the opening paragraph, I perceived with joy that the MS. was no copy but an original composition, and probably written by our monk.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SORCERY AND WIZARDCRAFT.

JOHN FREEMAN'S NARRATIVE (*resumed*).

NED was greatly disappointed at finding his cache yield so little, but the monk's book pleased me better than if I had discovered gold. My eagerness to read what the monk wrote supplied an aim and purpose to my Gaelic studies, to which I now devoted myself with great alacrity and even keen pleasure. I found, too, in a short time that my task would be easier than I had anticipated, for though the characters of the book were Gaelic, its language was bi-lingual. It was, in fact, written partly in Gaelic and partly in Latin, while a good many isolated words and phrases were Greek.

Here now, for the first and almost the last time in my life, I found my grammar-school

education of some solid benefit to me. The opening sentence was very singular. It ran thus :—

" The place of the writing of this book was the Cave of the Demons, which looks forth to I-Brasal and the setting of the sun, and the time was the eleventh year of Flann Sionna, in the Kingdom of Ireland, and the fourth year of the holy Bishop Cormac in the Kingdom of the two Munsters, and the reason why I have written it is to make myself known to the two youths (*juvenes*) who in the end of the world will visit this cave, and also that they may learn things that will be a benefit to them."

My amazement in making out the meaning of this passage may be imagined, and naturally conducted to metaphysical thoughts, in which of course I found no end, and in which Ned's hints and suggestions, when he made any, were of little use.

The early part of the book was an autobiography. Owing to the length of time and the labour which I expended over this book, I know the whole of it so far as I went by heart, and

could write down accurately what the monk related of his history.

To both of us all this was naturally intensely interesting, but as I fear it would not prove so to others, I shall only set down in a succinct form the leading events of his life. He was, he said, the twenty-third son of the King of Hi-Mainé, and his name Beth, son of Bian, son of Art. I shall make no attempt to explain the historical or topographical allusions in which, however, the learned may find some meaning. The "twenty-third son" certainly surprised me, till I was informed, as I afterwards was by a distinguished Celtic scholar, that amongst the pre-Norman Irish large families were very common, and the law of inheritance very different from that which prevails at the present day.

The monk went on to name his foster-parents, whom, and his foster-brothers, he described with much affection. While still a boy, he was taught by a certain holy man, but afterwards he fell under the influence of a person whom he described as a Magus or Magician, *et in arte Druidicâ sapientissimus*. Elsewhere he re-

ferred to this *ars druidica* as *ars magica*, and used both expressions freely and as if convertible terms. Till then I had always regarded Druids as priests, but my monk spoke ever of Druids as magicians. Then he went on to tell how, at the age of fifteen, he was presented with arms by the king, and how the same day he killed *in duello honesto* (in a fair duel) a youth to whom he had sent a challenge six months before that event.

Here a good deal followed concerning his wars and single combats, after which he declared that, in the opinion of all, he was considered the best of his father's sons.

Subsequently he was elected captain of his nation (*capitanus meœ nationis*), and King of I-Mainé, but was opposed. Then he alluded many times to his most dear son (*carissimus filius*), who while still a child was captured and blinded by some rival competitor to the monarchy in this small realm—of which punishment, he said, the child died in great suffering. Then the evil genius of Beth, son of Bian, seems to have taken the command of his life. I do not

like to recall the terrible vengeance which he exacted for that barbarity. Finally he was driven from the kingdom—*desertus*, he added, *etiam a meis familiaribus* (forsaken even by the members of my own house).

Then he entered a monastery, from which, however, he was again recalled by his adherents or some powerful party in the country, but was once more defeated and expelled, owing, he said, to lack of treasure wherewith to hire soldiers. A second time he was driven to assume the religious garb, but did so with the intention of employing the religious vocation for the purpose of amassing gold.

He excelled all others in austere practices, and came to be regarded with great awe and reverence in consequence. Many men came to him for advice and counsel, and brought gifts, which, however, were taken for the service of the monastery. Then he determined to become an Eremite, and descended—he was, he said, *demissus*, or let down—into the Cave of the Demons (*antrum demonum*), declaring that he went thither to exorcise the demons and to

purify that place. His real purpose was to be independent of the monastery, and to amass gold.

Hither also men of wealth resorted to him for counsel, and brought gifts. One sincere purpose only animated him—the desire to amass treasure that he might once more strike for his kingdom and take vengeance upon his foes. With that end, and in order to give responses the better to those who consulted him, he resumed the practice of the *ars druidica*, and became a servant to the demons. At this point he made a remarkable statement. He said that this cave, which he also called the "Cave of the Stream," was but the *adytum* or *vestibulum*, in fact the vestibule of the great cave (*ingens spelunca*) of Orchil, *quae fuit dea subterranea gentium Hibernorum*, *i.e.* of Orchil, the earth-goddess of the Pagan Irish. Of this vast subterranean temple of the Gentile Irish there were, he said, two mouths, one the cave in which he wrote, and another far inland, named in the Irish language Glann-a-Sidhe, and that both had been closed by the orders of the holy man Brendan, the navigator.

He said that by favour of the demons, and by using the right spells and incantations, we could pass into and through that cave and thence into the outer world by that second closed entrance, for that those beings, whom he also called *dei gentium*, possessed great power; and that the approach from our cave into the great temple of Orchil was in the neighbourhood of the fountain.

He said that to him, owing to his art, the centuries were transparent, and that he had clearly seen us and loved us—me for certain things which he mentioned, but which I do not like to set down; and my brother because he so much resembled his own murdered son. He also said that, by his art, he had been able to project an image or resemblance of himself into the future, so that it would be perceptible to us. For time, he said, had no real existence, and all its barriers might be overleaped by one who has been instructed in the *ars magica.*

Had these appalling utterances come upon me suddenly, I believe I would have at once cast away the book, such was its blasphemous

audacity and impiety, but they came to my understanding by slow degrees, and after weeks of study and reflection, so that my mind gradually became subdued to the evil influence.

Age, he said, came suddenly, and like a robber, upon him here; and one day he discovered that, owing to the weight of years, he was cut off from the life of warriors and kings. Moreover, the fascinations of the Druidic art enchanted him in a wonderful manner. "My *thesauros* or treasure chamber," he wrote, " is in the great stone (*juxta fontem*) near the fountain."

Of this more presently.

To Ned I said nothing concerning all that magical and forbidden side of the monk's communications. Ned says that during those days I was like one in a dream, and so strange that he often felt tempted to fling the book into the sea while I slept, but that he feared to do so, I had become so fierce and terrible as if I had been under the dominion of some evil spell.

Of this I knew nothing at the time. I was only profoundly rapt and fascinated as the monk's strange story slowly disclosed itself

through the haze and mist of the unknown tongue. I thought that magic, like alchemy and astrology, was something exploded and done for, yet here I stood almost face to face with a magician who evidently believed in his art, and had in fact projected, as he said he could, some image or phantasm of himself into my time. In his whole book there was not a single religious allusion; in fact, the man seemed to be a sheer Pagan or Druid, and not a Christian at all. If what he said was true, then it was not an illusion of the imagination Ned saw, but himself seen through the centuries, as if they had been walls of transparent glass.

What he said concerning the great cave-temple, and the exit thence into the outer world, naturally arrested my most rapt attention. He seemed anxious to make the person into whose hands his book might fall his pupil in this forbidden art, and to that end directed the reader to test its reality by using a certain formula, accompanied by certain gestures.

One night, while Ned slept, I used those words and signs. What I saw then I do not dare to

set down, nor the signs and words of which I made use, lest any one should be tempted to do the same, though possibly away from that cavern they might lose their potency.

The effect upon myself was so serious that I fell sick of a fever and was nursed tenderly by poor Ned, who must have been awfully frightened by my ravings. Ned believed that to the book all this was due, and when I began to be convalescent he, seeing me so weak and unable to hurt him, one day took courage and flung the book into the sea, where it is now, and where I hope it will remain for ever.

To tell the truth, when I became aware of the fate of the book, I did not regret it. It removed from me an awful temptation, to which I might have again yielded, and which in the end might have destroyed us both, body and soul.

In this chapter I have set down at Mr. Furbisher's instance in perfect *bona-fides* what I remember of my experiences in this place. But the reader must remember that the events which I described occurred in my boyhood; that both Ned and myself were in anything but a sane

condition during our cave life, and that quite possibly I mingle sheer imaginations with realities. The monk's book was certainly a reality. It supplied us with the singular ladder by which we made the descent, as will be presently related. But of the things which I represent the monk as having written, and of the strange manifestations which succeeded the use by me of his signs and formulas, though I remember all most vividly, I certainly would not at the present moment swear that they are true. The facts, as I entertain little doubt, have become inextricably entangled and confused with the hallucinations and phantasms of a mind which was at the time profoundly disordered; nevertheless I have thought good to write all things down just as they present themselves to my memory, and as they seem to me to have occurred.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HERMIT'S TREASURE-HOUSE.

As soon as I was able to move about, I made my way to the big stone near the fountain and examined it carefully. I found nothing in it suggestive to the eye of any hidden chamber. Then I took a bit of timber and a mallet, and sounded it all over, just as we had sounded the rock walls of the cavern. At one point—it was on the top—the stone returned a hollow sound. This place I now examined very carefully by the light of the lamp, and perceived that in the stone there was a circular patch about a foot in diameter, very slightly, yet noticeably diverse in hue from the colour of the rest, being just a very little darker, though of the same geological formation—that is to say, limestone. I took chisel and mallet—the former was now nearly

quite worn out—and began to chip the stone just on the outside of the circle. The outer stone chipped away while the inside or darker stone remained intact. I cut in to the depth of an inch or more. The outer stone continued to chip away, leaving the inside quite smooth to the touch. It was plain then that the circular patch represented a round lid or stopper of stone, carefully prepared and let into the mouth of an interior cavity.

I now summoned Ned to my side, and told him of the discovery. As may be imagined, he was keenly excited, more so a great deal than I was. What was treasure to us, situated as we were? And yet there lay unsuspected, in the interior of this stone, the means of our salvation.

Then I went with my chisel to the other side of the patch, and chipped away in like manner to the depth of about an inch. So I had a purchase for my fingers on both sides. The monk, I fancy, used to lift out this stopper, which had no handle or anything to lay hold on, by the simple device of a leathern sucker, like

those which schoolboys use for suspending slates —viz. a sucker and a cord. Then quite easily I lifted up the stone stopper, and in the lamplight was suddenly aware of the gleaming of gold. The cavity in the interior of the big stone was filled with the ring money of the ancient Irish, the rings about the thickness of my little finger, each of them exhibiting a little gap or gateway.

That night we spent in counting and assorting our treasures, and endeavouring to calculate their value.

"If we ever leave this place," said Ned, "we will be millionaires. Why, the monk must have gathered to himself the treasures of the whole country. How did the people come to him, I wonder?"

I surmised that the consulter was let down from above to the cave of the oracle, and got his reply while so suspended in mid-air.

"But how did the monk get in here, in the first instance, for the cliff hangs beetling overhead? By swinging, I suppose."

So we conversed, saying many things wise

or foolish. Day by day now I recovered my strength, and indeed was sincerely glad that that terrible book was no longer in the cave to tempt me.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE GOLDEN CHAIN.

JOHN FREEMAN'S NARRATIVE.

ONE morning shortly after this, while I was cooking breakfast, I saw Ned at the cave's mouth, hammering away very diligently at something or other. I saw that he was using the axe for a hammer, and was surprised that his strokes did not send out a sharper sound. When I called him to breakfast I saw his eyes dancing.

"What's the fun, Ned?" I asked.

"Who said there was any?" he replied, quick and saucy.

"Well, I think your eyes did, old boy," I replied. "But keep your secret. I'm not curious."

No more was said till breakfast was nearly over.

"Don't you think it is time for us to be getting home, Jack?" he said.

I looked sharply at him, not forgetting that he wore just the same manner on that morning when he had discovered the spring of water.

"What is it, Ned?" said I. "You surely are not joking on such a subject."

The only answer made by Ned was to whip, clanking out of his pocket, three of the gold rings, neatly linked together and forming a chain. My heart leaped. I saw it all as in a flash. A chain of gold rings; a descent by that chain, and then home. But would it be long enough? Would it be strong enough? These were questions only to be solved by actual experiment. I filled my pockets with rings, and hastened to the spot where Ned had been working. I had guessed already his mode of operation. He had leathered the back of the hatchet, and with this was closing the gaps in the rings by the simple process of holding the ring upright, and beating it till the edges of the gap came together. The ring so formed he hooked on to the next, and proceeded in the

same way to close the gap of that ring in its turn. I followed his example, choosing a piece of heavy timber and leathering it. Our boots supplied the leather. For a good while now we had been going barefoot; the soles of our boots were quite worn away; but we had carefully preserved the uppers, knowing well that any scrap or tag, the product of civilization, might be useful to us here. It was slower work than I had imagined, for, fearing to break the gold, we considered it more prudent to do our hammering gently. Our anvils, so to speak, were timber, and we kept a bit of leather under the ring while we hammered. When I had linked together half-a-dozen rings, I gave my chain to Ned to join on to his own.

Then we took it to our parallel bar, and made it fast there. We were now about to test the strength of our chain. That was a serious moment. We were both white and trembling. When the chain was fastened to the bar, it was some time before I could bring myself to hang to it. At last I did. "Hurrah!" roared Ned.

The chain held firm, while I slowly revolved in mid air.

"Balance one of the heavier planks on my shoulders, Ned," I cried.

He did so, and the chain held firm.

That was enough. Filling the big tripod with gold rings, we returned to the entrance, and worked harder than miners are said to work for gold when they hit a streak. From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve, we wrought without intermission. Every day we lowered our chain to test its length. For our return home the weather was perfect, being fine and frosty, and the sea still. Lower and lower fell our chain of linked rings, glittering and glistering in the sunlight—a beautiful spectacle. Of course, we carefully tested the strength of the chain according as we made it, bit by bit, lest there should be a defective ring. At length our last ring was used up. The distance from the end of the chain to the sea was still considerable. It was not much of a drop, indeed; but as I have said before, the water under our ledge was shoal even at full tide—too shoal to drop

into from a height. We now plaited together our fishing lines, mingled with strands of twisted tow, and made a rope of the required length strong enough to bear us. We contrived to spare one line. Across the same fork in which our boat, the poor old Rake, had been caught as in a vice on the night of the hurricane, we laid my parallel bar, which I had hammered out of its place in the interior of the cave, and to it made fast our rope. To the rope, then, we attached the golden chain. We did not quite close the rings near the lower end. The *auri sacra fames*—in plain English, our desire to bring home with us a little gold—prompted that device, as will be seen.

Next we brought on to the platform all our unburned timber, of which we had still a pretty good supply. Of course, we lifted our door off the hinges, and added it to the rest. We intended to make a raft, and get home comfortably and dangerously by swimming. We might have to swim for miles before getting to a landing-place, and possibly might not be able to endure the chill; for it was mid-winter, frosty

too, and our life on the ledge had, to say the least, not made us stronger. As we could not well make a raft upon the ledge, and then fling it over, we determined to throw over the timber bit by bit, and make the raft as well as we could in the water after our descent.

To the various timbers we now made fast all articles which we intended to bring with us—our faithful old tripod which had saved our lives in the hurricane, our porringers, the remains of the blanket, our top-coats, the hatchet and chisel, etc., etc. Our kettle we filled with spring water, and let down, secured to the end of the chain. To get to any landing-place on such a poor raft as we could construct would be a difficult task, and we had to provide against misadventures.

At last our preparations were completed, and the great morning dawned. The weather was still fine and frosty. The wind, as I guessed from the motion of the waves, blew from the south.

Then with loud "hurrahs" we heaved over the timber with all the attached articles, and let

down the chain with its load of spring water. I made a farewell speech to the cave after the manner of Philoctetes in the play, while Ned stood before me chuckling, his black eyes dancing with joy, admiration, ridicule, or I know not what. I accorded Ned the privilege of descending first. While he went down, I peered over the ledge, and watched his receding and diminishing form. Presently I could see him swimming about vigorously below, collecting the floating timbers like a shepherd's dog driving together a flock of straying sheep. Then I descended, too, letting the chain slip between my hands and legs.

We collected the floating timber, and, standing upon the reef up to our waists in water, began to construct our raft. This we secured partly with nails saved from the *débris* of the boat, and partly with that spare line already referred to. It was by no means easy to nail together even thin boards in a medium so yielding, but we overcame that difficulty by certain ways and means on which it is not necessary to enlarge.

When the raft was completed I hoisted Ned on my shoulders, who, reaching up as far as he could along the golden chain, inserted the edge of his hatchet in the half-closed gap of one of the rings, and after a great deal of wrenching and manipulation, succeeded in detaching a chain consisting of five of those precious links. That was all that we were able to bear off with us on this occasion, but of course we intended to return with the proper means and appliances, rescue the whole, and while still boys, make a start in the world as millionaires.

Then we stepped our mast in the receptacle which we had previously prepared for it, hoisted the remnant of our blanket, and slowly moved northwards, driven by that gentle breeze from the south. Now that we were free, I noticed for the first time how woefully lean, yellow, and hollow-cheeked was Ned.

Weak indeed we were, and ragged—oh so ragged! but also, oh so happy! Our troubles were ended, and it was now "Home, home! sweet, sweet Home!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DESERT ISLAND.

It was a very rude raft, by no means strong enough to sustain us, and we sailed with our feet in the water. Indeed, we had by no means enough of timber. I tried to guide her due north, but failed. The wind seemed to have shifted a point or two, and now blew from the south-east; there was indeed very little wind, but such as there was blew from that direction. The consequence was that we were driven more and more away from the shore. Though we paddled our best with boards which we had retained for that purpose, our exertions hardly appreciably affected the motion of the half-sunk raft. We only succeeded in preserving our kettle of fresh water by tying it to the mast. We regretted now that it was not the tripod which

we had filled. We looked all around for a sail or boat, but looked in vain. So, hour after hour, we had the misery of perceiving that we were drifting away further and further from the land. I knew very well that it was foolhardy starting from the cliff when the wind was not blowing more or less from the west, and so did Ned. We had been too hopeful, eager, and precipitate, but were now, having served a long apprenticeship to misfortune, stoical enough to know that it was no use crying over spilt milk.

Upon such a raft, of course, we could light no fire. If we were very hungry, we might eat our food raw; but we were not hungry enough for that yet. In fact, we ate nothing all that day. All this time I may mention I had my gun strapped to my shoulders.

The sun set, and darkness came down, or rather moonlight and starlight came down; for though it was hard for boys with their feet in frosty water to admire the wonders of the starry host, it really was a glorious night so far as moonshine and starshine were concerned. Then we found that by a certain management of the

loading of the raft, including ourselves, we could tilt the raft over, so that one of us could have his feet out of the freezing water. This small alleviation of misery we enjoyed by turns. All that day and night, too, we had to stand. Let any one try standing without walking only one whole day in a warm room, and he will partly realise the nature of the rough time which we put through on the raft.

Still, it was something to be on the sea and released from our rock-prison, and we kept up a stout heart.

When day began to dawn, I feared that we might be out of sight of land, but that was not so. Eastward, I could discern plainly enough against the whitening east the distant mouse-coloured hills of holy Ireland. But it was to the west, or rather north-west, the direction in which we were moving, that our eyes were most keenly bent.

At first we could perceive nothing, then, as the light grew, I thought I saw far away a large island, and then became sure of it. When it was certain we could not make land, we had lowered

the sail. We had done that yesterday about noon. Now we hoisted it again, observing that the wind blew in the direction of the island. About eleven o'clock in the forenoon Ned made another discovery—viz. that between us and the large island there lay a small one, but very green, and not many miles away, and that the wind, with a little management of the sail on our part, and a little paddling, would blow us right on to it. Ned joyfully announced that he saw *sheep* on the island.

I was not so cast down by the singularly bad time which we had put through during the last thirty hours as not to be able to give Ned an appropriate bar of poetry on this occasion :—

> "Many a green isle needs must be
> In the deep wide sea of misery;
> Or the mariner, worn and wan,
> Never thus could voyage on."

To this Ned responded with a most cheerful burst of music from his cornopean, to which he had clung, as I had to the old muzzle-loader. I, too, now saw the sheep, but no sign of human habitation.

Slowly but steadily, wafted very gently, and as it were very tenderly, we drew nigh to the green island, though such was our haste now to arrive that we paddled incessantly.

It was between two and three o'clock when we ran the raft ashore in a very sweet little harbour with rocky and grassy sides and a bright, pebbly strand. The tide was nearly full. We leaped ashore, secured the raft, and, as soon as we had recovered the use of our limbs, ran over the whole of the little island. It was only five or six acres in extent, and shaped like a flat-fish. It was nearly level, and was indeed most exquisitely green, in spite of winter. It may be imagined how glad we were to run and leap here after such a long imprisonment. On the western shore of the island we found another little harbour, and near this, in a certain depression, about half-an-acre of tillage land and a little hut. The hut was not thatched, only roofed with strips of turf cut from the green floor of the island. It was uninhabited. We only found there some straw, a heap of turf, and an old rusty spade almost worn to the stump.

Evidently some neighbouring islander was in the habit of coming here to till the little patch, spend a few days at work, and then go home. I seized the spade, hastened into the patch, and dug furiously. It was a piece of ground which had grown potatoes that year. The potatoes had been long since dug out, but I knew I would find some by a second digging.

"Perhaps he has pitted them," cried Ned.

At this suggestion we searched around, and did find the poor man's little store. What is called a potato pit is really not a pit at all, rather the reverse. The potatoes are thrown together, and earth piled over them. So the pit is, in fact, a ridge. We found the ridge a small one. Leaving Ned at work rifling this treasure-house, I returned to the hut and kindled a blazing fire, using for that purpose my last match. I had burned the second of the three in the cave, for our fire had gone out once. That was when we had been oppressed by water famine Then I went out with my gun and shot a sheep. They were small and swift, and almost as wary and shy as wild animals. I brought it back on my

shoulders, and proceeded to skin and dress it. Ned had in the meantime not been idle. He had brought from the raft, at the other side of the little island, all that we required. When I returned with the sheep, his pot of potatoes was on the fire, and he himself, sitting on a little throne of sods of turf, was expanding his hands to the blaze, and smiling into it prodigiously with a smile that was most childlike and bland.

From our mutton and potatoes we made a sort of Irish stew, and as we did not spare the mutton, knowing that there was more where it came from, we had also a grand supply of the strongest and most nutritious mutton broth. Let it be remembered that we had had only a few really good meals for nearly six months, and that we had now gone without food for some thirty-four hours. I think the philosophers who denounce carnal delights would find their beautiful ideas on that subject rather upset if they passed through our experiences, and found at the end of them such a repast as was ours this night. That, indeed, was a great night. I remember none such in my life. Apart from

personal and private satisfaction, it was a joy to me only to look at Ned's face, to see his lantern jaws visibly filling in, and to see him fattening as well as battening before my eyes.

We had still the remains of our little flask of whisky. Ned had dosed me with some of it after my recovery from the fever. I was afraid that he would now call for punch, the occasion being so joyful; but he did not. His French horn supplied the element of hilarity, and on this he operated with such vigour that I feared he would burst his cheeks.

At length, shaking the drops out of the horn, he announced his intention of making a closer examination of the cabin for concealed treasures. I laughed at this scornfully; but in a few minutes Ned brandished before me a snuff-paper, white, and a brown paper parcel. The one contained tea and the other sugar. He had found them in one of those little receptacles in the cabin walls, which Irish housebuilders always leave as cupboards. The poor man who tilled that little patch had either forgotten them, or, as is more likely, had left them behind him

till he should have occasion to cross hither again. He apparently lived on that large inhabited island which I have already mentioned.

We now had wild ideas of running down a ewe and milking her, so as to have tea in proper form; but, indeed, we might almost as well have thought of running down a hare. We made tea in the kettle, and drank it hilariously out of our porringers. In short, we had a glorious supper, and slept in straw, greatly relishing the warmth which now surrounded us, for in the cave, of late, we were never really warm.

We were now indeed prisoners again, but under most pleasing circumstances. Here we lacked for nothing, not even water, for we found a spring quite close to the house. We were in no great hurry to get home, nor was it possible to do so owing to the wind. I was anxious, too, to bring Ned home fat and in good liking, and not in such a condition that he would frighten his mother, who certainly would not have recognised him were he to come before her in the miserable condition in which he left the cave.

Next day we enjoyed ourselves about the island, and feasted much and often. The sensation of an hourly increase of strength was most delightful, and the remembrance of it even now thrills me with pleasure.

In the meantime, finding a good deal of drift timber on the shores, we made our raft much bigger and stronger.

During the four days of our residence on the island we ate more than three-quarters of that sheep.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOME, SWEET HOME WITH ADVENTURES BY THE WAY.

On the fifth day the wind shifted to the south-west. It was a lovely day, though frosty, and the atmosphere very clear. It was the 24th of December, and Christmas Eve. We thought it was the 22nd. This day, after breakfast, we launched our raft and set sail for home, or rather for the mainland. We only knew that home was somewhere to the north-east.

We were about an hour out when we saw a boat rowing after us, and coming at a tremendous pace, too. I was astonished at the fury of the rowing. The boat came evidently from the green island. While I wondered at the fury with which the men seemed to row, the thought suddenly entered my mind : " These people saw

our smoke. They mistake us for thieves. They will overtake us, and beat us to death with their oars." Indeed, we were as near death this time as at any other crisis since we left home. My slight knowledge of Gaelic saved our lives on this occasion, for they did not know a word of English, and were naturally indignant at the stealing of their sheep and the rifling of their potato pit. When they were near enough I stood up, taking care to have my gun in my hands, and hailed them in a cordial manner with the usual Gaelic salutation, wishing "God and Mary" to bless them. The steersman, a fine-looking old man, with hair as white as snow, thereupon stood up and shouted I know not what; but I saw that he was in no way mollified, but was indeed in a towering passion, and that he meant business, and bloody business too. I tried to explain to them in my broken Irish how and why we had killed their sheep, but either they did not understand what I said, or the noise of their rowing and the passionate objurgations of the old steersman prevented them from hearing. I levelled my gun at the steers-

man, but even that produced no effect. I was debating with myself whether, as a last and desperate resort, I should pull the trigger or not, when I heard a faint and distant shout, accompanied by the discharge of firearms. At this our bloodthirsty pursuers stopped rowing, and looked round. So did I, and saw, still far away, a big coastguards' boat, manned with coastguards, all rowing their best, and behind the boat the smoke of the just-discharged firearms, discharged as a warning to the islanders.

The way which that furious rowing had put upon the islanders' boat now brought her close to the raft. Again I explained to the steersman what I had endeavoured to explain before. He was now in a more rational mood, the result of prudence; for along the west coast the coastguards are looked upon as a sort of water-police, and regarded with much awe. I told him, still speaking in Irish as well as I could, that we had killed the *caorah* (sheep) owing to hunger (*ucris*) —a word which I repeated many times; that we were the sons of Mr. Freeman, the clergyman of Dun-Beacon, and that I would send a money-

order to the man who owned the sheep. I used the word "money-order"; all the Gaelic-speaking westerns know that phrase. Presently I perceived with heart-felt satisfaction that their wrath was giving place to curiosity, and the amiable and humane feelings so common amongst these islanders getting into the ascendant. But certain I am that, but for my slight knowledge of Gaelic and the intervention of the coastguards on this occasion, such was their fury that they would have beaten us to death as pirates and sea-thieves, taken red-handed in the act.

Nor can I altogether blame them. I believe that a professional thief—a fellow who is resolved to live by preying upon the industry of others—is as fit a subject for capital punishment as any other sort of criminal.

When I repeated my promise to send the money-order, as soon as they understood what I meant to convey, they only laughed; and the white-haired old steersman—probably the owner of the animal—said that we were welcome to all the sheep on the island if we were Mr. Freeman's

sons, for that by all accounts he was "a good man."

They offered to tow us to Dun-Beacon, saying they could get us there before nightfall, but this offer I declined. The wind was now set fair, and I had a fancy for getting home, so to speak, on my own hook.

The big, good-natured islanders rowed beside us for a good while, delighted with my story, which I eked out with signs, and often made one word do for a sentence. At last, as the coast-guard boat drew nigh, they sheered off—conscience-stricken, I fancy, and mindful how very near they were to having committed murder. Indeed, though I have gone through a good many experiences full of life-peril, I don't think I was ever nearer to death than on this occasion. Had these fellows overtaken us with their angry fit upon them, they would have given us no quarter.

We were now free to direct our attention to the coastguard boat. To my surprise and delight, whom should I see in the stern with the tiller ropes in his hands, and a grin from ear to

ear upon his honest face, but my little brother Sam, beside whom, in a constrained attitude, sat a strange lad, with big, wondering eyes, quite ridiculously well-dressed, but a nice youth too, whom I liked at once and instinctively, though I did not know then that he had come all the way from Brittany to our rescue. All the coastguards, man by man, Jeffers and Gatt and Spraggs and Chard—the English lower orders have such funny names—were old friends of ours, and our meeting was of a joyful and even hilarious nature. I remember stepping on board for a while, but we refused to be taken in tow. We sailed right home, and steered the raft into the same little coos—Watkins' coos—from which we had set sail five months ago that lovely July morning.

On St. Stephen's Day the weather suddenly broke, and for three days there raged a tremendous storm. As soon as the agitation of the sea had sufficiently subsided, young Furbisher, Ned, Sam, and myself, started for Carrig-an-deamhain in the eight-oared barge, manned this time, too, by coastguards. Our object, of course,

was the recovery of the golden chain. We intended to send Ned up with a line attached to his waist. Reaching the platform, he was to draw up this line, to which we intended to make fast a strong cord sufficient to sustain his weight. He was then to cut and throw off the golden chain, secure his cord to the parallel bar, and descend.

But alas! when we reached the fatal cliff, the golden chain had vanished, as if it really had been fairy gold. On various occasions, both then and subsequently, we endeavoured to bring to light that cable of linked gold which was to have made Ned and myself millionaires, but to this day the accumulated earnings of our eremitical Druid and questionable monk lie in some unsunned chasm or unexplored recess in the depths of the Atlantic, hard by the Crag of the Demons, smelt at by congers and other deep-water fish, and walked over by unconscious crabs.

Of our five links we gave one whole link to Sam for himself, in recognition of his spirited and fraternal behaviour, which left Ned and

myself two a piece. Mr. Watkins, the constabulary officer, effected a sale of the whole for £160, of which Sam got £32, and Ned and myself £64 each. But out of this we felt it right to repay Frank Furbisher what he had expended in searching for us after his arrival at Dun-Beacon.

As the possession of even half-a-sovereign before that had been a rare event with even me, the eldest, it may be imagined that we three were by no means sorry for an adventure which, in spite of its rough side, issued in results so excellent. Ned and I, indeed, ran through our money like spendthrifts; but prudent Sam banked his, and very difficult indeed we found it to get a loan from him, and then only at a smart interest.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

POSTSCRIPTA.

POSTCRIPT BY SAMUEL FREEMAN.

WHEN we chanced upon Jack and Ned in the singular manner which Jack has partly described, the first word which I said was, "Well, this is a sell!" Here were we, Frank Furbisher and myself, fretting ourselves to death's door about "the lost ones"—that was what Frank called them—and imagining them dead or dying. Yet when we found them, they were not, as I had all along predicted, one bit grategul. And as to dead or dying, I never saw them fatter, jollier, or in better liking at any time. Jack, with his gun in his hand, and grinning hugely, did not say a word. Ned was bugling as if he were at a pattern, and then, with his cornopean in his right hand, began to dance a

hornpipe, and fling his long legs about. It was such a ridiculous exhibition, that I had to tell Frank that they were not always so. But the strangest thing about them was their dress; I never saw such a pair of scarecrows. Both were barefooted, their trousers ragged to the knees, and patched in the seats with pieces of the blanket, which was the sail of the Old Rake. They had curious sorts of baggy coats, made out of the same blanket, with bits of twine round the waist. Both of them had caps made out of the skin and feathers of sea-gulls, with wings on both sides of their heads and tails behind; and Ned's cap had feathers standing up in front, like an Indian chief's.

Jack called out to all the coastguards, man by man, before mentioning me; and when he came on board he only pinched me by the ear, and, pushing me aside, took the tiller ropes in his own hands, and stood up, looking like some great sea-captain at the very least, and utterly unconscious of his ridiculous appearance. Then he bade me introduce him to my friend, to whom he made a very grand bow, at the same time

elevating his sea-gull, which was enough to make a dead skate laugh. "Yes, we of the first form are very polite," I used to hear him say. Then he began to chat in a very light and airy manner with my friend, as if he had known him all his life, and as if I, who was Frank's friend, was nobody at all; and he would crack stupid jokes about me, and then he would laugh. However, I must say that, after a while, he whispered something to me which set things right.

We all came home together upon the raft to Mr. Watkins' coos—that is to say, I and Frank, and Jack and Ned; and Mr. Watkins and his policemen were there, and kept back the crowd, and Jack made them a speech, and they huzzaed, and said—

"We wouldn't doubt you, Master John. Sure we knew you'd find your way back again." And that was a lie, for not one of them but believed that he and Ned were drowned. And I believe the islanders whose sheep they had eaten would have killed them only for me and Frank.

POSTCRIPT BY FRANK FURBISHER.

THOUGH I was too late to rescue the brothers from their perch on the cliff, I am glad to think that I was the means of preserving their lives; for, as John Freeman has already related, those infuriated and savage islanders would have killed them both but for our appearance on the scene.

Sam, using my glass, though he did not recognise the two figures on the raft as his brothers, was sharp enough to see that the pursuers were enraged, and that it was with some bloody intention they followed the raft. He said as much to the chief boatman, who directed some of his men to discharge their muskets, as a notification that the strong arm of the law was on the deep. Happily it had the desired effect.

I remained in the country more than a fortnight after that, and was the daily and nightly companion of the Freemans. Their rare freshness, naturalness, and abounding spirits worked a wonderful change in me, both in body and

mind. As Sam has already mentioned, the country was full of game. There was not the most rudimentary attempt at preservation; but as no one shot the country except ourselves, that made no difference. We coursed and shot and dug out badgers and hunted otters; and as the weather after that storm was perfect, there was not one day, saving Sundays, on which we had not excellent sport of some description. With Mr. Freeman in the evening I had a great many interesting religious conversations, chiefly concerning the interpretation of the more mystical and prophetic portions of the Old and New Testaments. The more I saw of John Freeman, the more I admired him—his dash, courage, fine physique, and ebullient spirits. He was by nature anything but introspective or meditative, as I was; but in a simpler state of society I fancy he would have grown to be a great leader of men, so bold and resourceful was his mind and so domineering his temper, yet at the same time so frank and genial and sympathetic. He was afterwards nicknamed Primus, as the eldest of the Freemans, at his school, and the nickname

stuck to him through life. I fancy he would have been Primus almost anywhere.

I am glad to say that I have retained down to date the affection of all the brothers, including even little Charley, with whom, ever since he has grown up, I find myself most *en rapport*, and that letters, even to-day, are perpetually passing between us five.

POSTCRIPT BY EDWARD FREEMAN.

I CERTAINLY saw a man in the cave, but Jack's vivid and precise account of all that incident, though I have not the least doubt honestly written, is, I believe, an example of unconscious imagination.

It is not true, as alleged, that Jack "licked" me. He was always the best of brothers.

Curious to tell, seeing that he used to be so fond of books, it is I who have since taken to literary pursuits. Jack is now a great sheep-master, and has distinguished himself as an

explorer in Central Australia. I am the editor of a newspaper, which I own. When he returned from his first expedition into the interior, I wrote some fine editorials on the subject, and would have written more but for a letter in which he promised to come over and give me a "Jobation." His subsequent achievements I was only permitted to chronicle, and that in the dryest manner.

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O'Grady, Standish, 1846-1928.
The chain of gold :